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*Names have been changed for reasons of privacy.

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Post Code: _____

Tel No. _____

I am seriously interested in meeting a partner through Dateline.

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☐ Single ☐ Divorced
☐ Widowed ☐ Separated

Age: _____ Height: _____

Occupation _____

Religion: _____

Build:

☐ Slight
☐ Medium
☐ Large

Attractiveness:

☐ V. Attractive
☐ Attractive
☐ Average

YOUR PERSONALITY

Tick which traits closely describe you

☐ Affectionate ☐ Fashionable
☐ Serious ☐ Practical
☐ Considerate ☐ Conventional
☐ Shy ☐ Reliable
☐ Romantic ☐ Adventurous

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Please tick for a liking, cross for a dislike or leave blank for no pref.

☐ Wining/Dining ☐ Jazz/Folk music
☐ Pubs ☐ Classical music
☐ Sports/Keep fit ☐ Theatre/Arts
☐ Politics/History ☐ Watching TV
☐ Reading ☐ Smoking
☐ Travelling ☐ Mixing with friends
☐ Science/Tech ☐ Children
☐ Cinema ☐ Homemaking
☐ Pets/Animals ☐ Gardening
☐ Pop music ☐ Countryside

Dept. PE86

YOUR ATTITUDES

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☐ I prefer town life
☐ I involve myself in community activities
☐ I have many friends of my own sex
☐ I am interested in current affairs
☐ I am looking for one special relationship
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☐ Don't mind

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☐ Widowed ☐ Separated
☐ Don't mind

Build:

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☐ Medium
☐ Large

Attractiveness:

☐ V. Attractive
☐ Attractive
☐ Average

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Freezer	£200	£40
Toshiba Fax Machine	£400	£60
Landrover	£4,750	£2,300
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Gnome

THE decision of Mr Straw to let in Mr Michael Tyson, the distinguished rapist (*Surely "boxer"? E.S.*) is as brave as it is cowardly. (*Surely another mishtake? E.S.*)

This is not purely a question of sport but one involving literally thousands of British jobs which would be affected were Mr Tyson not allowed to appear on the Gnome Sport Pay-Per-View Channel next week to fight (*fill in name of unknown opponent*).

Many businesses beside boxing would lose out, including fashion boutiques, jewellers, security guards and the flourishing rape alarm sector.

Ear surgeons would have to stand down, police officers would have to cancel their overtime and many journalists would have nothing to write about.

Moreover, many young *Guardian* readers would be deprived of the pleasure of shouting in the streets.

No, Mr Tyson is to be welcomed here. Besides which, it should be remembered that many more unsavoury characters have been permitted to enter Britain and do business, namely myself. (*Surely "General Pinochet"? E.S.*)

E. Stobes,
pp. Lord Gnome,
Sky Boxing Promotions plc,
Wapping, EC1.



"I was sold it by Robin Cook"

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ACTRESS Sally Farmiloe is "heartbroken" at being dumped by her lover Lord Archer, the *Mirror* reports. Even after their three-year affair was revealed last month, she still assumed that "he would come round once all the fuss had died down". But Archer has now told la Farmiloe he wants nothing more to do with her — and ordered her to stop ringing him.

A "close friend of Sally", who sounds suspiciously like Farmiloe herself, tells the *Mirror*: "Sally was devastated to think that he can treat her like this... How can a person that has shared so many happy moments and intimate memories humiliate another person in a way like this?"

The answer may be that even the dim-witted Archer has finally rumbled her. For Sally is not only a self-publicist in the Archer league — she once flew naked on a hang-glider — but also shares his talent for "inaccurate precis".

When the *Daily Star* first revealed her affair, on 20 December, Farmiloe announced indignantly that she was "consulting my lawyers". Six days later, however, she gave a toe-curling "exclusive" interview to the *Mail on Sunday*, confessing all.

Well, almost all. While gushing that "Jeffrey loves me and I want to marry him", she continued to imply that the exposure of their affair had nothing to do with her. The truth, however, is rather different.

The story was brought to the *Star* by a photographer, who said that Farmiloe's secretary — one Mary Gavin — would be willing to confirm it, though without her employer's knowledge. Deputy editor Hugh Whittow duly went to see the secretary, who was wearing dark glasses and appeared to be heavily pregnant, but he soon twigged that "Mary Gavin" was in fact Farmiloe herself, with a cushion shoved down her dress by way of disguise. Sally then came clean, and said she would help incriminate her paramour.

The trap was one with which Archer ought to be familiar by now, since it was also sprung on him by Monica Coghlan and Ted Francis. With Whittow beside her and a tape recorder running, Sally rang Jeffrey. "The *Daily Star* is on to me," she wailed. "What can I do?" Archer's advice was predictable: say nothing, and if they publish anyway we'll sue for libel and take them to the cleaners, just as in 1987. In short, he was once again willing to perjure himself and incite a friend to connive at it.

Now that the boot is on the other foot — with the *Star* suing Archer for the return of the money he took off it 13 years ago — this tape might well come in useful. Curiously, the paper has not even hinted at its existence, nor mentioned Sally Farmiloe's cooperation. Which is just as well: if it were known that la Farmiloe had helped to expose Archer's adultery, her subsequent protestations that she still adored him might have sounded ever so slightly hollow.

LAST week's £630m collapse of trade finance group Versailles will come as a huge embarrassment to "new" Labour and Tony Blair in particular.

Last year Carl Cushnie, Versailles' multi-millionaire boss, appeared in a Labour party political broadcast for the European parliament elections. He was reluctant to appear and only changed his mind after a personal appeal from the prime minister, keen to associate himself with Cushnie.

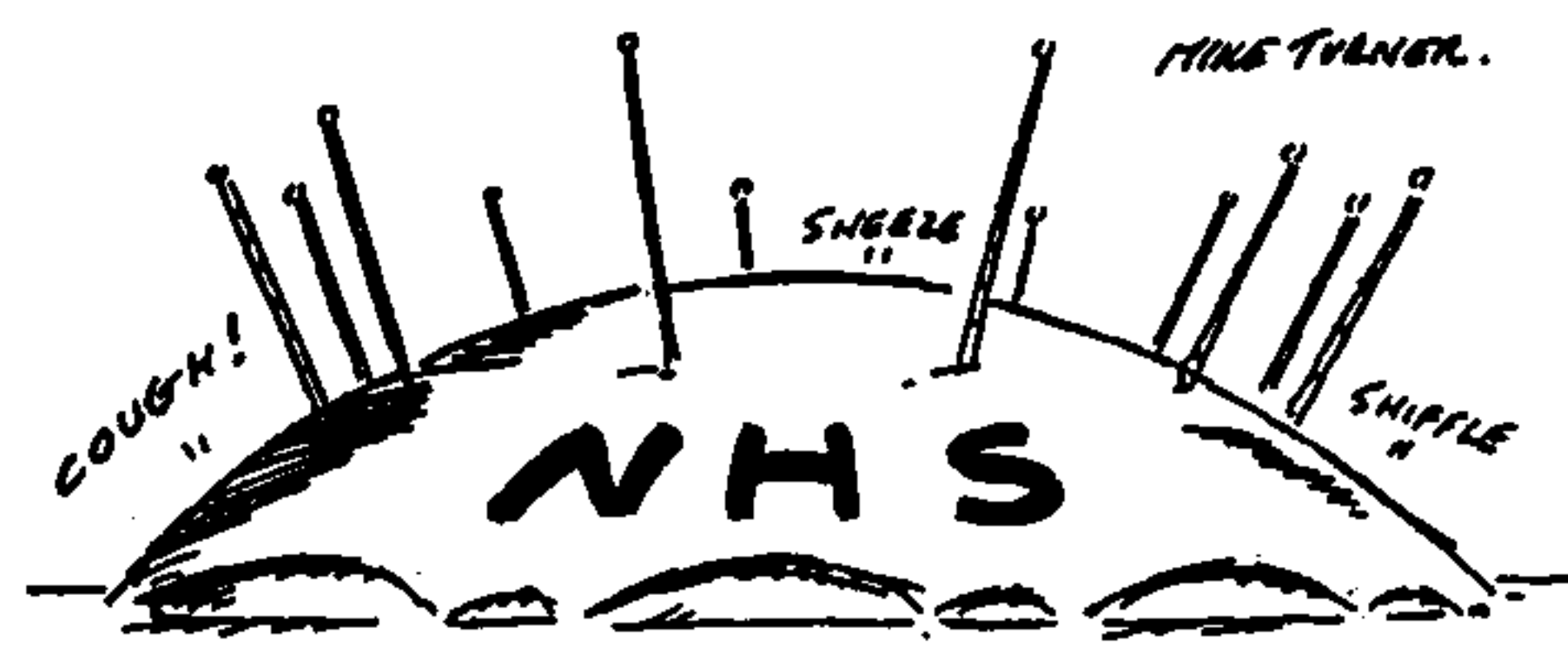
Now the company is in receivership and the Serious Fraud Office is investigating Versailles and Tony's friend's role in its demise.

● See *Slicker* for full story.

ATTENDANCE figures at the Greenwich dome are so low that free ticket vouchers are being distributed among the comrades at the TUC.

Accompanying these freebies is the suggestion

101 Uses For A Dome



No. 2 Doctor's Waiting Room

that unions might want to offer the vouchers as competition prizes in their in-house journals.

As a union rep suggested, perhaps the competition question could be: "What could the dome money have been better spent on?"

A HELPFUL mole at the home office has given the *Eye* a copy of Mohamed Fayed's application for naturalisation as a British citizen, submitted back in 1994.

At first sight all appears in order. As required by law, two referees who have known the applicant for many years — Field Marshal Lord Bramall and, er, Jeffrey Archer — both sign a declaration that he is "of good character". The rest of the form is duly filled in and signed by Chairman Mo himself.

But what is this? In the section for "date of birth", Fayed has put 27 January 1933. As he well knows, this is a lie: he was born on 27 January 1929.

Pardonable vanity, perhaps. But at the head of the form is a prominent warning drawing the applicant's attention to Section 46(1) of the British Nationality Act 1981: "To give false information on this form knowingly or recklessly is a criminal offence punishable with up to three months' imprisonment or a fine not exceeding £1000 or both."

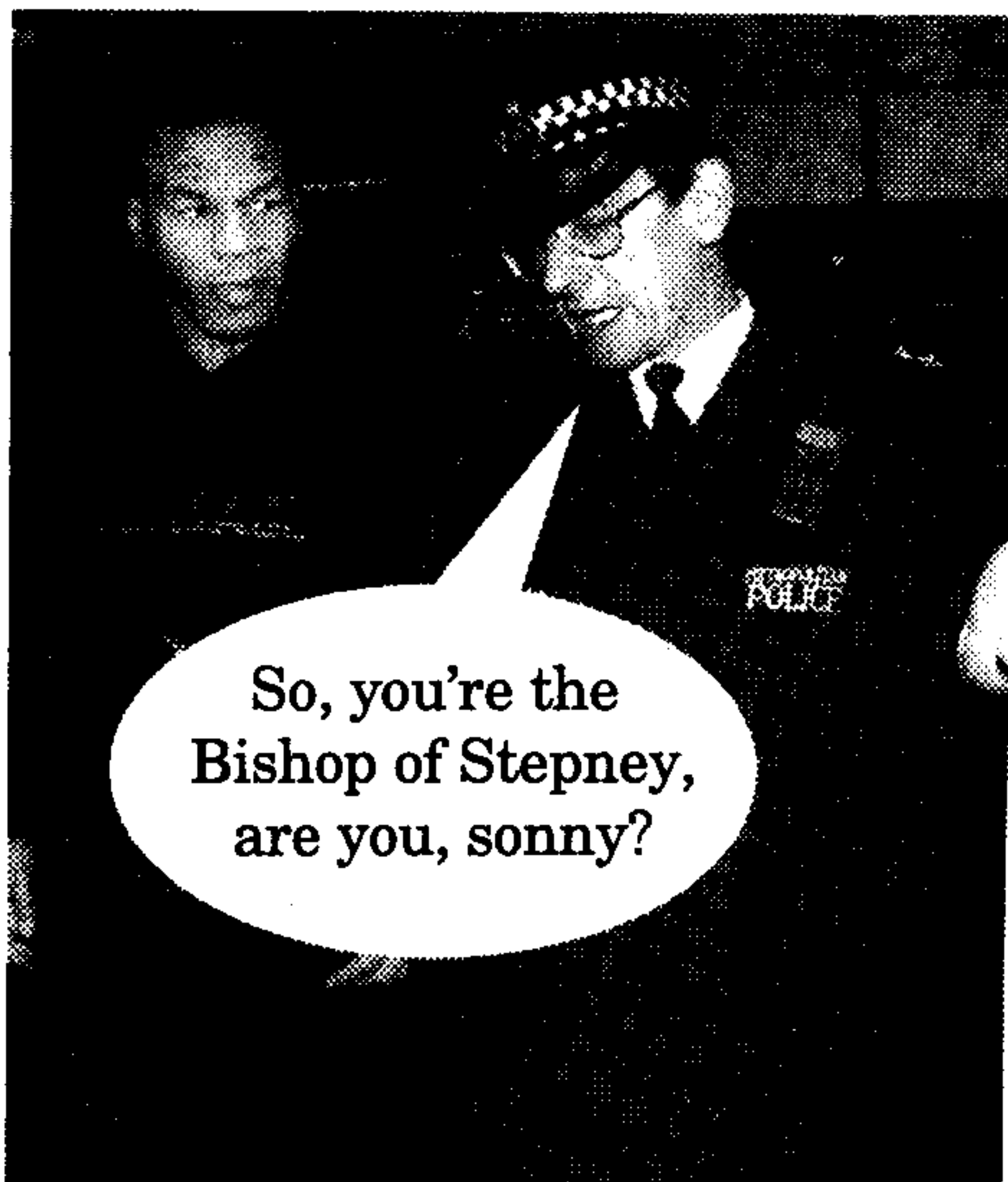
Since the government promises to be tough on crime, we trust Inspector Knacker will arrest the miscreant forthwith.

YORKSHIRE Electricity chief executive Graham Hall has announced the axing of 350 jobs in Yorkshire, all in the cause of efficiency.

Perhaps the reduced administrative burden will allow him to spend more time on his other job, as chairman of Yorkshire Forward, the government-appointed regional development agency whose prime function is, er, job creation in Yorkshire.

- Thick as a plank? Gumboot on tree people 7
- Crude health: Milburn gets his sums wrong; M.D. finds no cure for the winter crisis, 8 and 12
- The long good buy? Birt takes the money 10
- BSE: The beef about those vaccines 26
- Woodhead's Gordano knot comes undone 27
- More Street of Shame 6

NEW POLICE MISTAKE



Street OF Shame

IN THE *Spectator* two weeks ago, Kevin Maguire revealed why he quit recently as political editor of the *Mirror*: Piers Morgan kept spiking stories that might offend 10 Downing Street. "It was," Maguire said, "like having Alastair Campbell as your editor-in-chief."

Piers promptly hit the roof. In the next day's *Mirror*, across the top of page two, he declared that many of Maguire's stories were indeed spiked – but only because they were "utterly tedious" and "unprintable tripe". The diatribe was embellished with a photo of a pile of manure to represent the quality of Maguire's journalism.

Readers with long memories must have been slightly puzzled. Only a year earlier, on 12 January 1999, the same spot on page two had been filled with an ecstatic eulogy from Piers to "the two most feared and talked about political journalists in the country... They have dominated the political agenda with a string of exclusive stories and brilliant commentaries... The whole of Westminster is talking about the dynamic duo... Keep reading the *Mirror* for the No 1 team in political journalism."

The team in question, as Piers proudly informed readers, consisted of pundit Paul Routledge and, er, "award-winning political editor Kevin Maguire".

THE journalist most unhappy over the dome fiasco is of course Simon Jenkins, former editor of the *Times* and *Evening Standard* guru.

Jenkins is not sounding off too loudly about his crucial role in getting the dome built in the first place. Just as the prime minister was beset by doubts about the great white elephant, the effervescent Jenkins wrote him a letter expressing the view that the dome was one of the greatest plans ever to have been set out by human beings in the whole history of the world.

Knowing Blair's affection for his children, Jenkins drooled on about how the inside of the dome would be perfect for Euan, just what Euan would love. Impressed at this earthy approach from such a distinguished man of letters, Blair suppressed his doubts and the dome went ahead. The thoughts of Euan on the subject – or even if, indeed, he has ever been inside the dome – have yet to be published.

GEOFFREY ROBINSON must be reeling from the splash story in last weekend's *Sunday Times*.

It revealed that the former chief accountant of his TransTec company Max Ayriss was now willing to "blow the whistle" on how TransTec fraudulently applied for department of trade grants worth more than £400,000. As *Insight* hack David Leppard also disclosed, "Ayriss's claims are supported by Peter Dickinson, the company's former sales manager".

This is the best scoop the *Sunday Times* has had in years. Since 31 March 1996, to be precise, when Leppard wrote a splash story claiming that Max Ayriss was blowing the whistle on how Robinson's company Transtec had fraudulently applied for DTI grants worth more than £400,000. It added that "his claims are supported by Peter Dickinson, who worked as the company's sales manager".

We look forward to the story's next appearance on the front page – which, on past form, should be sometime towards the end of 2003.

EAGLE-EYED viewers may have noticed a curious omission in the latest TV ad for the trashy women's gossip mag *That's Life*!

Set in a downmarket restaurant, two women enthuse over articles in the latest issue – about a woman whose husband was such a brute she ran off with another man, a woman who gained weight after having triplets, and so on. Yet the only strapline clearly visible on the issue held by the two women is the lurid lead story "I shopped my husband for using child porn".

Despite the last two words being in capitals, the story seems to have escaped their attention. And in the final "pack shot" of the magazine, the words have been electronically removed altogether. Okay for the newsstand, but not for TV reviewers, it appears.

THERE was a big row at the *Guardian* following its recent two-page demolition special, "The Case against Ken Livingstone".

Some editorial staff were at pains to point out that trawling for quotes among Livingstone's detractors without doing the same with other candidates or allowing Livingstone to counter them in the same issue smacked of "blue" journalism, a practice much frowned upon by newspaper colleagues in the United States.

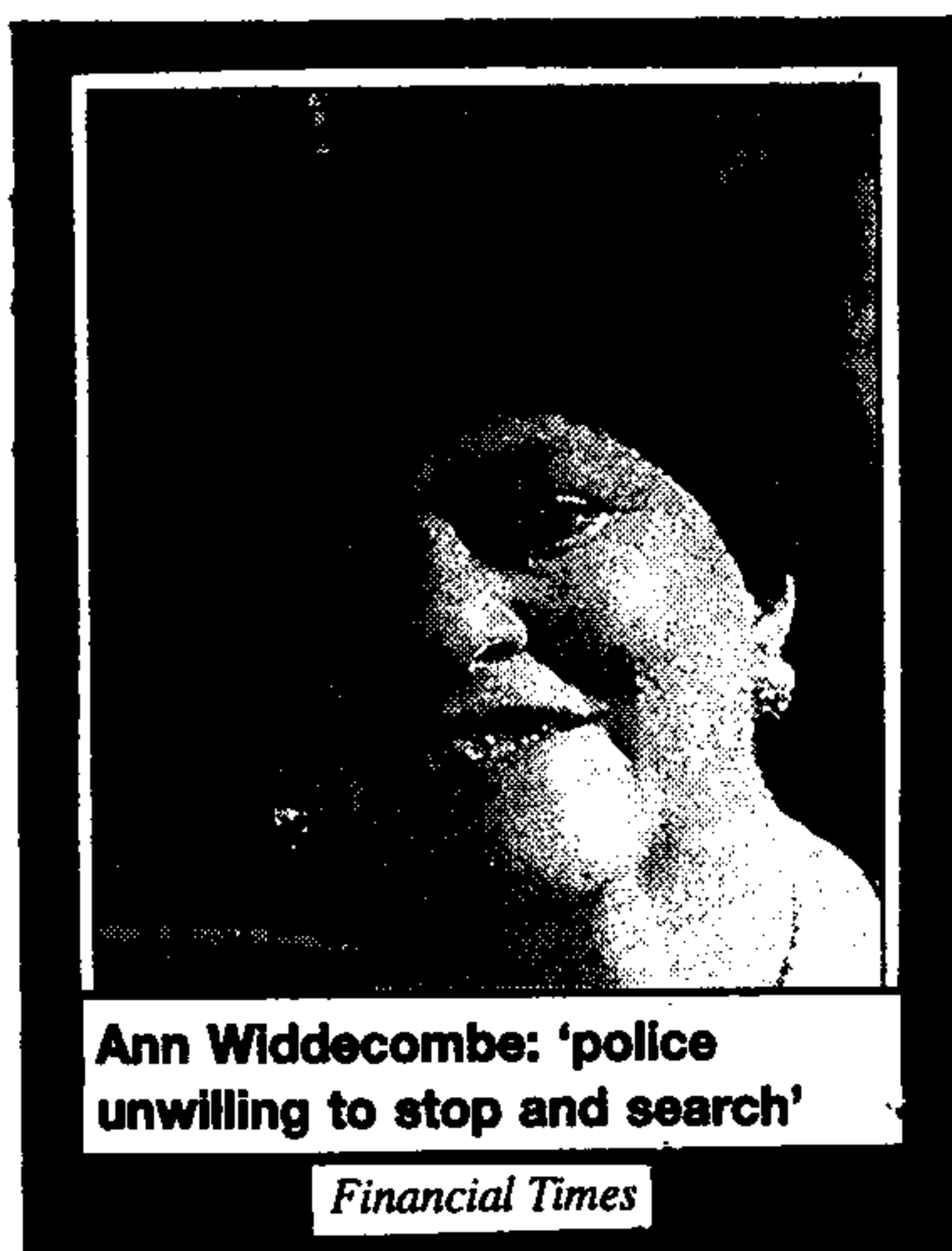
Those quoted in the paper of late who have been reasonably well disposed towards Leninspart, or at least critical of "new" Labour's electoral college, have included Labour leftwinger and ex-GLC councillor John McDonnell MP, Livingstone's biographer and the paper's education correspondent John Carvell and leader writer Jonathan Freedland. Lining up in the much bigger anti corner have been Clare Short, David Blunkett, Bernie Grant, Michael Cashman and *Grauniad* columnists Hugo Young, Polly Toynbee and Ian Aitken.

But let no one accuse the *Grauniad* of not knowing which of Labour's three lovelies is its favourite for London mayor. So far it has decided to urge readers to vote for... none of them.

THE *Grauniad*'s Mail-style attack on Livingstone was undertaken by none other than former *Mirror* man Will Woodward.

Older readers will recall that before leaving the *Mirror* Woodward was responsible for the huge front page scoop that brought the 1998 Labour party conference to life and delighted Number 10 spin doctors at the same time. "Sex Pest Scandal rocks Labour conference", barked the rag, launching a totally bogus attack on one Greg Palast.

Palast was of course the *Observer* journalist whose undercover operations had sensationally exposed the extent of the influence peddled by the lobbying industry with senior Number 10 policy unit advisers. Woodward got his "story" straight from Labour party press officers and the unwarranted coverage it received delighted the spin doctors no end.



Ann Widdecombe: 'police unwilling to stop and search'

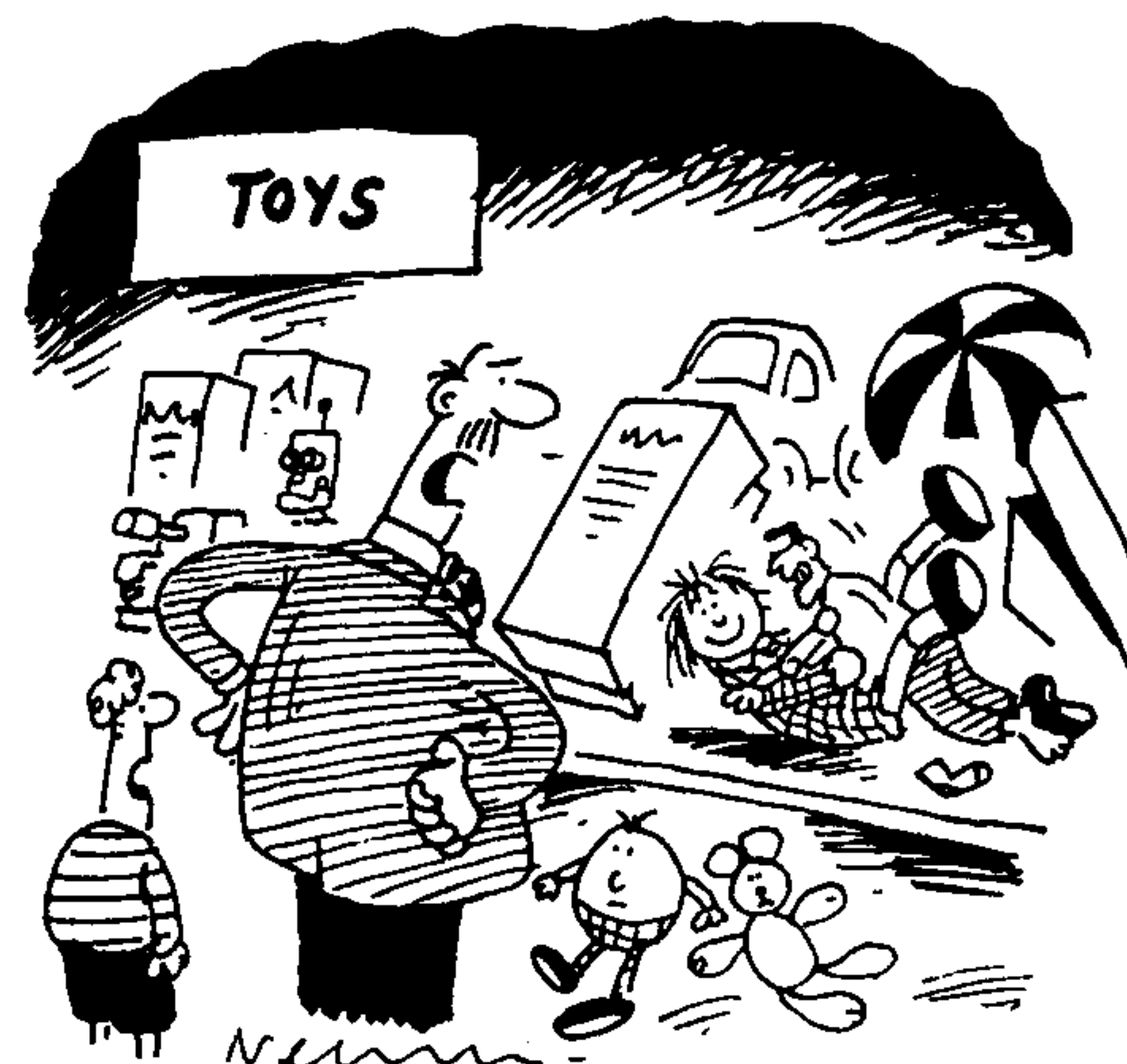
Financial Times

AT LEAST one interesting snippet emerged from the wall to wall newspaper attacks on would-be mayoral candidate Ken Livingstone, courtesy of the *London Evening Standard*.

Peter Kellner's trawl through the cuttings produced the perplexing claim that "the real architect of Fares Fair [the cheap fares policy introduced by the GLC and banished by the law lords] was not Ken Livingstone but Peter Mandelson."

According to Kellner, the policy had been introduced as a result of an agreement in 1981 that the plans "would be the centrepiece of Labour's campaign for the GLC". The agreement was between "Mandelson and the then Labour opposition leader at the GLC, Andrew McIntosh." Memories of this period are hazy, but few around at the time recall the twentysomething Mandy, then a lowly and notoriously idle research assistant to Labour transport spokesman Albert Booth, as the brain behind cheap tube and bus tickets.

"It would at least be believable if he had credited MacIntosh," snarled one old veteran. Last summer Kellner announced to surprised hacks that he was "wearying of doing Number 10's job for them" over Livingstone. Why the sudden change of heart?



"We've got to keep Fergie Doll away from Action Man!"

MORALE has hit rock-bottom at the *Independent on Sunday*, where hacks have had enough of the bullying of editor Janet Street-Porter and deputy Michael Williams.

Following the story in *Eye* 991 about the reign of terror unleashed on junior staff, JS-P and Williams were told to lay off and learn a little tact by managing editor Jan Thompson.

Alas, the intervention had little effect. Last week Williams, during one of Street-Porter's increasingly frequent absences, had to make grovelling apologies to prevent news editor Barry Hugill and production editor Keith Howitt resigning after they lost patience with Williams' special brand of unconstructive criticism.

The atmosphere is so bad hacks have asked National Union of Journalists (NUJ) general secretary John Foster to intervene. This should be interesting. The supposedly liberal *Independent* titles, so quick to condemn unfair practices at work elsewhere, do not recognise the NUJ.

Meanwhile the daily *Independent*'s roly-poly editor Simon Kelner, aka Slimboy Fat, continues to dazzle with his intelligence.

As one of the editors forced to queue at the dome on new year's eve, Slimboy was unimpressed by the New Millennium Experience Company's offer of another free trip and a £15 voucher. "The £15 voucher is tacky," he told the *Daily Telegraph*, jowls wobbling with fury. "They ruined people's Millennium Eve, which is, for most people, a once in a lifetime experience."

SHOCK! HORROR! A forthcoming book by former gossip hack Christopher Wilson claims that the Duke of Windsor was cuckolded by a gay American playboy, Jimmy Donahue.

According to Wilson's chum Adam Helliker, writing in the *Sunday Telegraph*, the revelation of Donahue's fling with the Duchess "is already causing controversy among historians", and Wilson himself tells the paper that "in the light of the new evidence I have uncovered, the Windsor story will have to be rewritten".

Er, not quite. More than 20 years ago Messrs J. Bryan III and Charles Murphy published their biography of the Duke and Duchess, *The Windsors*, which included an entire chapter headed "The Donahue Affair". More recently, Caroline Blackwood's book *The Last of the Duchess* (1995) also discussed the Duchess's adultery with Jimmy Donahue. Any "historian" remotely interested in the Windsors therefore knows about it already – unlike the credulous hacks of the *Sunday Boringgraph*.

CORRECTIONS

IN *Eye* 992 we said barrister Eamonn Sherry was leading for the crown when Benjy "The Binman" Pell pleaded guilty to stealing rubbish from the bins of a London law firm, at Blackfriars crown court on 22 November. Mr Sherry was in fact representing the defendant.

And halfway through our article about Bahrain (HP Sauce, *Eye* 993), Ken Purchase, the Labour MP for Wolverhampton North East, inexplicably became "Mr Prentice". Apologies to Mr Prentices everywhere.

THE Sunday Times, journalism's answer to the millennium dome (a huge edifice with nothing of interest inside), has launched a round of cost-cuttings and sackings reminiscent of the heyday of Andrew "Brillo Pad" Neill.

First out of the door was York Membery, whose freelance contract was terminated abruptly after he submitted his invoices for a successful run of showbiz and media stories. Next to go was Chris Goodwin, the paper's venerable Los Angeles correspondent, who learned of his departure in a brief late-night telephone call. Environment correspondent Steve Bevan then decamped to the *Mail on Sunday*, while newsdesk wallah Christopher Broadhurst jumped ship for the *Times* – thus providing further welcome cuts to the wage bill.

But the penny-pinching goes further than a few well-paid hacks. For some years the *Sunday Times* has employed refugees from the former Yugoslavia as cheap freelance labour to research stories and do the phone-bashing on laborious ring-rounds of MPs and the like. They get £30 for a day that can last 12 hours, but even they have now been kicked out. Instead, the newsdesk has been calling journalism colleges asking if their students would like to gain free – and indeed unpaid – experience at the paper.

Meanwhile, external freelances and agencies are waiting ever longer for their cheques, mainly because executives have ordered that all invoices be put on hold for three months until the new financial year starts.

It may seem strange that a newspaper making £1m a week needs to introduce such stringent economy measures – until you discover that senior executives are now on a pay scheme which gives them a percentage of any savings they achieve. What price a few hacks' careers when there's a large executive mortgage to be paid off?

EXCITING news from Northern Ireland: the Provos are going to surrender their arms. The source of this confident announcement is former Daily Mail astrologer Jonathan Cainer, who has produced a cosmic chart for the new Stormont assembly.

It reveals that all the signs are positive, and the assembly – collectively a Sagittarius, like Cainer himself – will now go from strength to strength.

Cainer appeared on BBC Northern Ireland's *Hearts and Minds* programme to reveal these glad tidings, and consider the planetary positions and transits affecting the likes of Martin McGuinness and Ian Paisley. Dressed in dark suit and open necked shirt, he looked fighting fit – which is odd, given that for most of the last month the *Mail* has been informing readers that "Jonathan Cainer is unwell".

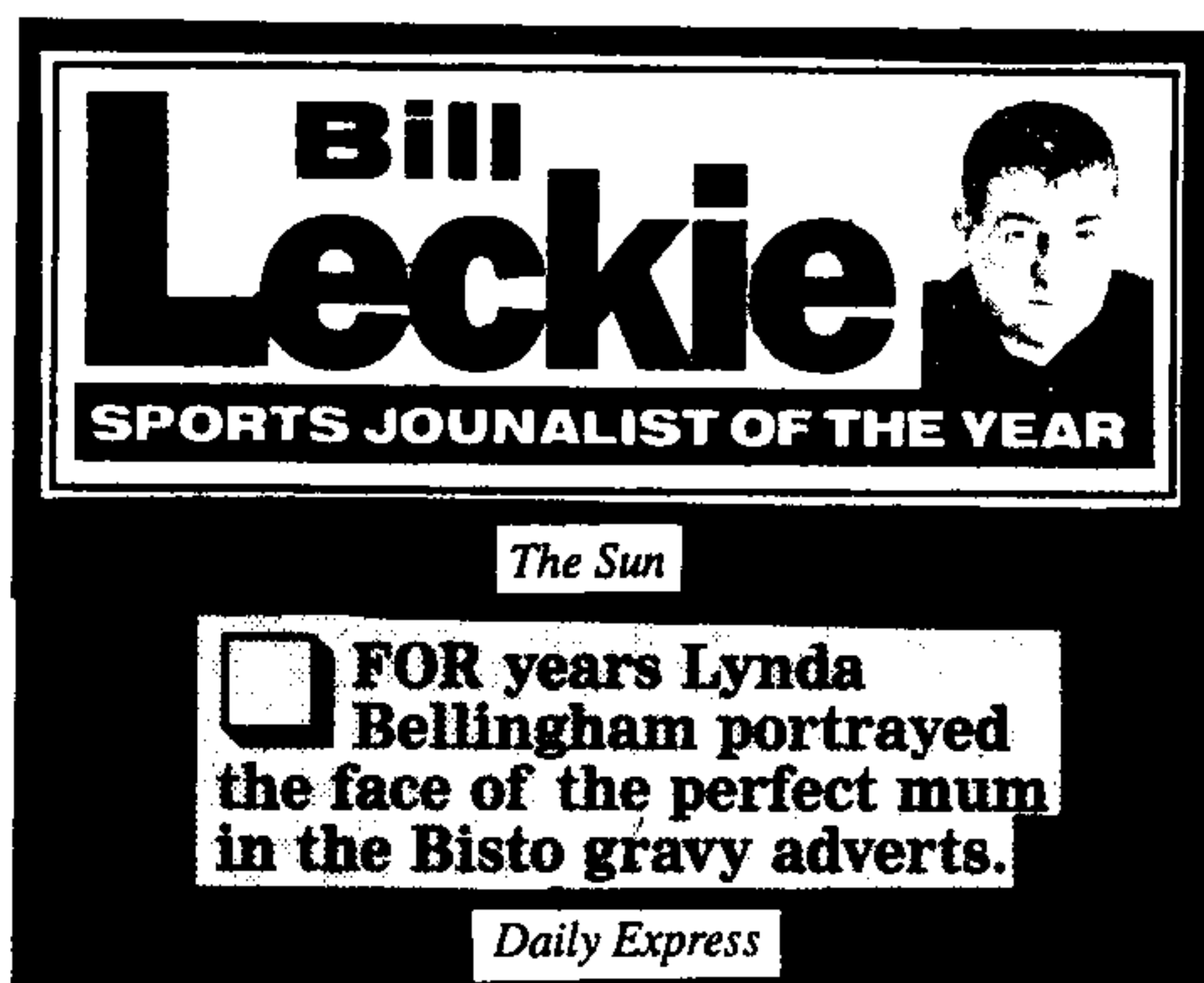
During one of several brief recoveries from his now famous "illness", Cainer praised his replacement, David Wells, and said how much he looked forward to reading more of Wells's columns. Not for the first time, Cainer's predictive skills have let him down: the *Mail's* sinister editor Paul Dacre has instead given the job to one Peter Watson.

Billed as "our new star", Watson was introduced to *Mail* readers on Monday with a full-page interview by Angela Levin. But the piece was curiously coy on one aspect of the new star. Talking of his "extraordinary relationship" with the late stargazer Patric Walker, Watson said: "I suppose you'd describe it as a teacher with a favourite pupil." Levin also noted that he now lives alone in South London: "Stephen, the person Peter is closest to, works in the world of opera". Stephen, eh? As Levin diplomatically put it, "Peter's personal life has not been entirely smooth or conventional."

Just the chap, no doubt, to embody the vigorously heterosexual and pro-family values championed by Paul Dacre's *Daily Mail*.

JOANNA COLES, the *Times's* gorgeous pouting New York correspondent, was in scintillating form in her column of 17 January.

She wrote a piece about Manhattan co-op apartment boards demanding to interview the dogs of prospective tenants before allowing them to move in. She even included a quote from real estate broker Sara Settembrini about the ordeal. Bitchy colleagues have pointed out that there was a similar piece on this very subject, complete with the identical quote from Sara Settembrini, which appeared one week earlier on the front page of the *New York Times*.



THE curse of Colonel Vandeleur, the phantom military historian, has struck again.

Last May (*Eye* 976) we published a letter from the colonel which argued that the Battle of Waterloo was in fact two battles. In the following issue we printed two letters from attentive readers who pointed out that James R. Vandeleur does not appear on the Army list, despite his claim to have served in the 1st Battalion of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, and that no regular officer with 40 years' service would place an MC after their name before a DSC – and both before a DSO and bar.

But in the *Times* Saturday magazine on 15 January this year, the mystery correspondent returned, still debating the topic of the two battles of Waterloo. The address he gives is not listed in the phone directory, the postcode is invalid and Vandeleur does not appear on the 2000 electoral roll.

JUST FANCY THAT!

Police have blamed a 60% increase in murders on a growing number of 'Yardie' drug-linked killings.

Assistant Commissioner Ian Johnston said Yardie shootings were very difficult to solve. "Co-operation from victims is non-existent."

CEEFAQ Home News, 9 January 2000

100 Years Ago

THE FAWNING obits for aeronautical engineer Sir Arnold Hall, former chairman of the Hawker Siddeley Group, ignored the most fascinating feature of his career: how he took part in ripping off at least £7m of taxpayers' money by submitting false accounts and got away with it.

As detailed in *Eyes* 163 and 167 (15 March and 10 May 1968) under the headlines THE GREAT PLANE ROBBERY and HALL OR NOTHING, in the spring of 1967 Bristol Siddeley Engines, a leading firm of plane makers, suddenly announced it was paying nearly £4m back to the government because of "excess profits" made on government contracts.

A committee of inquiry headed by Sir Roy Wilson later looked into the matter. It met in secret and named no names, but its findings sharply contradicted the official view that the overcharging had been the result of accounting errors on both sides. Full responsibility lay with Bristol Siddeley Engines, whose senior officials knew that they were charging double for overhaul contracts on at least two of their main government aviation contracts. The company's senior executive committee was fully responsible.

The Labour government reacted by removing the chairman of Bristol Siddeley Engines, Sir Reginald Verdun Smith, and business director Brian Davidson (a former Tory candidate) from obscure public offices to which they had been appointed. But the man most responsible, managing director and committee chairman Sir Arnold Hall, was never named or punished.

Then secretary of state for technology Anthony Wedgwood Benn said this was because "the managing director of Bristol Siddeley at the time holds no public appointments". This was untrue. Hall was a member of the government's advisory council on scientific policy; a member of the electricity supply research council; and he had just been appointed by the Labour government to its much-vaunted advisory council on technology.

While his colleagues were sacked Hall kept all three positions and launched an international industrial career. He became a director of Lloyds Bank, Phoenix Assurance, Rolls Royce and Royal Ordnance without anyone mentioning his role in the Bristol Siddeley Engines scam.

CONSERVATION

Thick as a plank

EVER since Tony Robinson and Channel 4's *Time Team* showed the felling of some oak trees in a Bromley wood for the Seahenge archaeological reconstruction, teddies have been flying out of numerous cots.

Many local and even national rags have reported the horror, while *Right to Reply* even gave airtime to someone who thought it was self-evident that trees should not be felled at all. (What does he wipe his bottom with?) The London borough of Bromley responded to letters with a fine knee jerk performance, immediately issuing a statement saying no permission had been given and it would investigate with a view to prosecution.

This could only happen in Britain, where a diet of historical myth, forestry propaganda and stories of global deforestation have produced a fatal misunderstanding. In this climate of ignorance it is probably too much to hope that many of the public will ever grasp the elements of woodland management – and that woods *need* to be managed.

We all know about the destruction of tropical forests by clearance (bad). Some may have heard of similar felling of primary "oldgrowth" forest in places such as British Columbia and Siberia. (bad, even when replanted.) Planting of trees in arid areas is done to conserve soils and moisture and halt desertification (good), unlike planting of alien conifers in the Scottish uplands which destroys everything (bad).

Then there are several kinds of British woods: the ones that matter here are ancient woods. Many have been cleared (bad) or coniferized (bad), and the rest are mainly neglected (not too bad). A tiny proportion are actively managed (good). Management of ancient habitats means copying whatever was done to produce the habitat, and in woodland this means... *felling*. What matters is that the wood itself survives – the trees themselves being the most renewable of all resources.

Conservationists turned this particular corner 20 years ago; today you would not find one who disagrees with the principle. The London borough of Bromley ought to know better, but doesn't. The wood in question is part of a group which have been lovingly managed by an expert for 15 years, in full consultation with the borough and the Forestry Authority. The technicality that the contract had recently lapsed matters less than that the trees were felled as part of a long-term management plan agreed by all parties. Still, that's what you get when the ancient craft of woodmanship ends up in a department called "Heritage and Urban Design".

Bromley, slogan "Clean and Green", has a feeble record on nature conservation. It is the possessor of much rare heathland, notably Hayes and Keston Commons. Sad to relate, these precious gems are derelict, being grown over with trees.

So despite a coming-of-age within conservation, normal woodland management still causes a huge fuss; and Britain continues to be a giant importer of tropical timber, while a million acres of neglected ancient woodland cry out for a revival of use. Welcome to the 21st Century.

'Gumboot'





IN THE TEAROOM

THAT desiccated calculating machine – health secretary Alan Milburn – has got his sums all wrong. It wasn't supposed to be like this at all. When he took on his present job it was implied that funding was going to be no big deal. The treasury would continue to pump-in the resources for a steady improvement in the NHS, while Milburn's task was to pick noisy fights with the "forces of conservatism" as represented by the BMA, the royal colleges and the health unions. That's his idea of fun.

His friends (believe it or not, he still has some) toured the lobbies and the tearoom with tales of a "grand plan" which had Tony Blair grooming young Alan as his heir apparent. Now he has to take his begging-bowl to cabinet, how much sympathy can Milburn expect from colleagues?

Not much. The chancellor can't stand him. When Milburn was foisted on him as chief secretary, Gordon Brown soon spotted him as a No 10 nark. He gave him a roll of plasticine and a desk in the corner and explained that now that three-year spending cycles were the norm, there wasn't much for a chief secretary to do. While his colleague Dawn Primarolo was always in and out of the chancellor's office, Milburn remained firmly barred.

You could make a full-time job of reminding "new" Labour ministers that their frequently recycled spending announcements could be a tad misleading; and that's what Milburn did. Unfortunately, one of his helpful memos leaked, blowing the gaffe on Jack Straw's party conference boast of 5,000 more coppers on the beat and creating one more enemy for life.

One of the last missives Alan dispatched was to health, warning in tough, uncompromising terms against expecting any cash from Gordon's "war chest". It arrived a few days later on his own desk, just vacated by Dobbo.

Mo is no great fan either – she thinks Milburn pinched her dream job. Geoff Hoon and Alistair Darling don't like the way Alan seems to snigger when they get public flak. John Prescott remembers the pushy Alan as the insistent voice behind the unpopular plan to privatise air traffic control.

Then there's ex-bestfriend Stephen Byers. From the moment he shaved off his moustache for political preferment he's become more a rival than a crony. Both Milburn and Byers emerged from the you-scratch-my-back I-drive-your-Jag world of Tyneside local government. The trade and industry secretary can keep his friends in the north sweet with new rapid response units to compensate for factory closures, Objective 2 European money (whatever that may be) and bail out plans for Siemens employees. What does Milburn (whose Darlington constituency is a marginal) have to offer? A couple of dodgy PFI hospitals. Heir apparent? He'll be lucky to be the next prime minister but three.

'Urquhart'



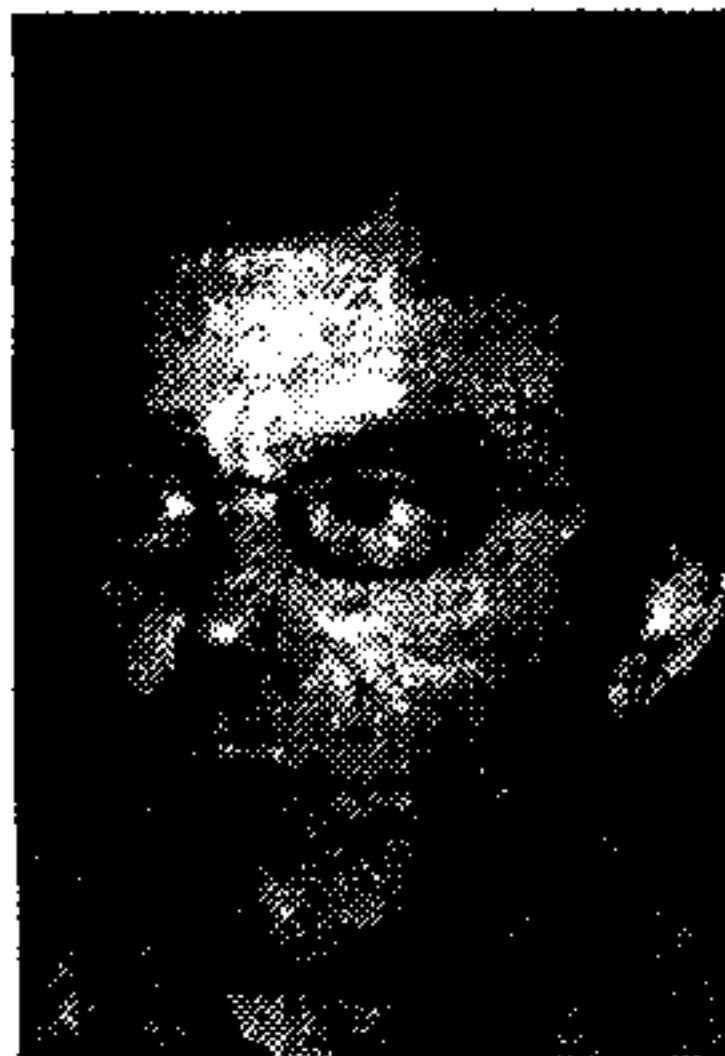
I think Tony Blair looks very saucy and dishy in his specs. He's now on a par with Sly Stallone and Val Kilmer as far as I am concerned.

Well done Tony, suits you sir!

Letter in *The Sun*

Nominated by William Macnab.

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.



"NEW" Labour has come up with a brilliant scheme to deal with the crisis in the health service – hand the running of hospitals over to Tory MPs under private finance initiatives.

Long-term contracts to run two major hospitals, the Carlisle General and University College London Hospital have recently been awarded to consortiums which both include the Buildings and Property Group, once part of the government's property services agency, of which former agriculture minister and Tory MP for Banbury, Tony Baldry, is an associate director.

ARE "new" Labour apparatchiks too frightened to speak in public unless they are briefed on what to say beforehand, even when the audience consists of students?

It appears that Blair babe Helen Brinton MP, who turned down an invitation to speak at a *Question Time*-style debate at the Cambridge University Forum, lacks the confidence to remain on message in a spontaneous environment.

Brinton, who had been invited to appear in March, asked to be given a copy of the questions or at least some idea of the subject areas to be debated.

When Forum's chairman explained that students submit questions by email in the week before the debate takes place, and that even he only receives them five minutes before the start, Brinton replied: "You understand that no MP can be expected to keep themselves fully informed on every topic. I'm sorry that in those circumstances I must decline your invitation unless you can give me some guidance on subject areas."

Presumably Brinton won't be appearing on the real BBC *Question Time* where guests are not given any advance warning of the topics they discuss.

"NEW" Labour denies that it couldn't care less about the countryside, but it has chosen to hand nearly 10 percent of the cash for rural bus services to urban South Yorkshire.

The "Rural Bus Challenge" – £16.8m of grants in England – sounds like a scheme to transform bus services in remote farming areas with scattered populations. Many such communities get no more than a handful of buses each week; but, alas, potential Labour voters are as thin on the ground in such places as the bus services themselves. So the adjective "rural" is now applied to any area where towns are separated by a few fields.

More than £1.3m of the rural bus money will go to South Yorkshire – an area covered by a metropolitan passenger transport authority (PTA) – for bus improvements in the Rotherham area. Because it has a PTA, South Yorkshire already enjoys better and cheaper public transport than most other areas. Britain's seven PTAs are kept afloat by a precept on local councils and a substantial annual grant from central government – money unavailable to other urban areas let alone the rural shires.

Jack Straw n. a worthless man. ☐ I like the look of this Jack Straw. ☐ The Jack Straw was not there.

NTC's Dictionary of British Slang

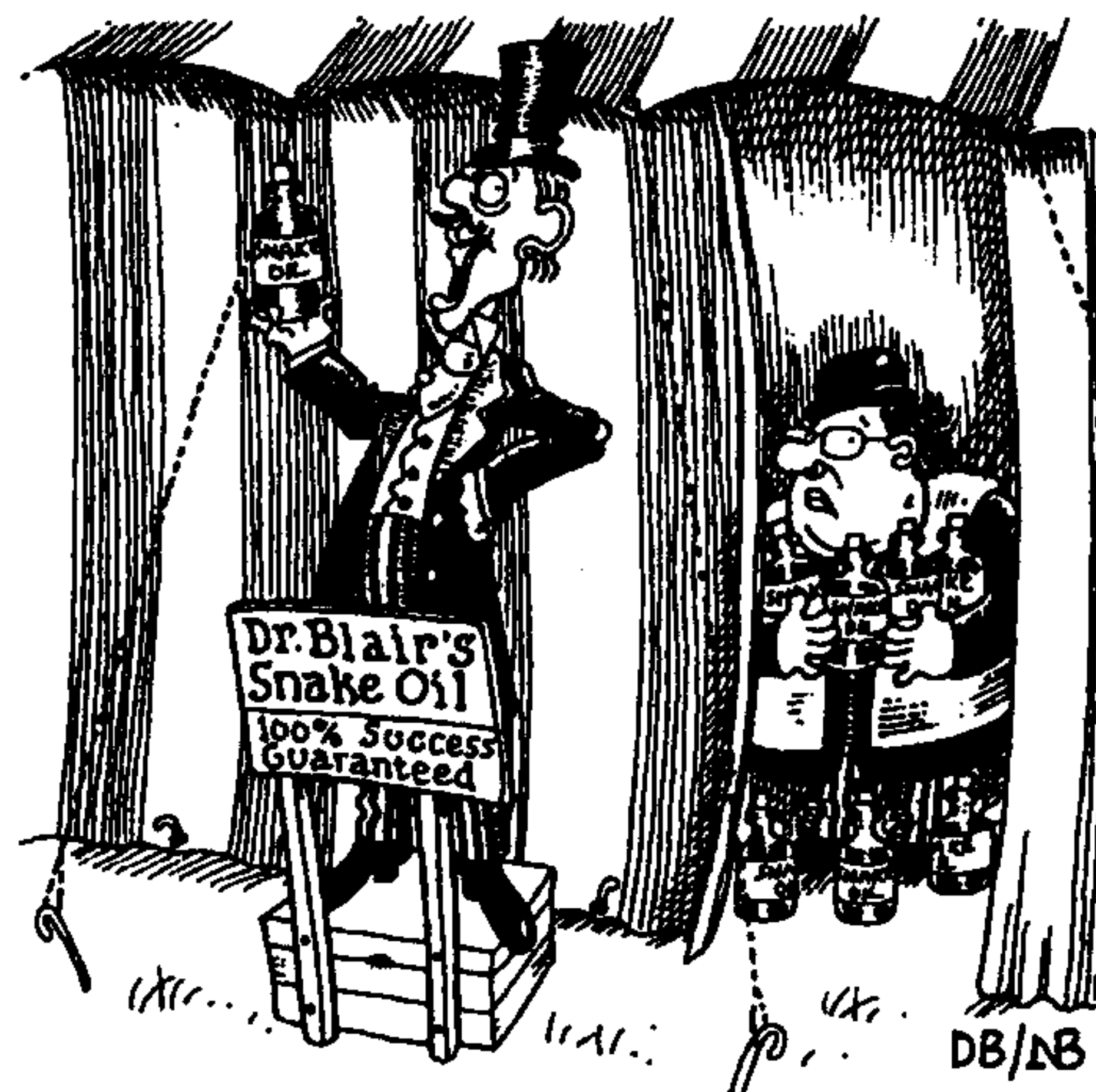
LAST November the Inland Revenue quietly introduced a new system to manage the collection of taxes, developed by its "strategic partner" EDS, the *Eye's* favourite computer company (known in some circles as *Everything Done Slowly*).

There were clear indications before installation that the integrated debt management system (IDMS) was not completely reliable, but the Revenue had little choice because the system it replaced, case load management, was not Y2K compliant – whatever that means in retrospect.

Also in November Jim McAuslan, head of the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) which represents IR employees, wrote to the board of the Revenue about the frustrations felt by staff faced with information technology that was malfunctioning daily.

The board ignored his warning and the example of the disastrous tax self-assessment scheme (see *Eyes passim*) and pushed ahead with IDMS. Not surprisingly, despite staff access being severely limited from day one, the system collapsed almost immediately.

NEW OLD SAYINGS



Lies, Dome lies and statistics

HONOURS NEWS

BEFORE the last election "new" Labour promised to investigate the funding of care for the elderly in a bold and vote-winning reassessment of welfare spending.

Once elected it did indeed set up a commission, to whose members it soon became clear that more money was needed urgently to provide even basic affordable care for those most in need. As soon as it also became clear that affordable care might clash with treasury spending forecasts... strange things happened.

Two commissioners, David Lipsey and Joel Joffe, suddenly decided to go it alone. They prepared an "independent" and prudent treasury-friendly alternative report that was useless as far as the elderly were concerned but was music to Downing Street ears. Careful lobbying ensured their novel alternative got almost as much media attention as the real thing.

Coincidentally Lipsey was given a peerage almost as soon as his heroic revision of the commission's findings had been completed, and Joffe was awarded a peerage as soon as suspicions of rewards for jobs well done had subsided.

TONY BLAIR's new year's honours list did not forget the great and good of the nuclear sector, awarding an OBE to Dennis Joynson, group director of British Nuclear Fuels Ltd (BNFL), in recognition of "services to the nuclear generating industry".

These services presumably include sending dodgy nuclear fuel around the world. BNFL, the firm where "science never sleeps", recently sent two shipments of Mox plutonium mix fuel to Japan, in armed ships to fend off pirates. When it transpired that the safety checks on both batches of Mox had been falsified, the Japanese firm on the receiving end, Kansai Electronics, rejected the shipments and Japan is now demanding the gun ships be sent back to take the nuclear fuel back to Britain.

A second nuclear gong was awarded to Graham Barnes, head of electricity training at British Energy, who was made an MBE for being a "beacon for youth" (presumably because he glows in the dark). Barnes' firm has been doing its bit for Britain too. In December it was revealed that the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate had demanded a halt to redundancies at British Energy because they were compromising safety – some 1,800 jobs have been cut since privatisation in 1995.

OH, YEAH?

Our aim is to help make the UK a better place for everyone to live in, and support its success in the world. We want to be the best at everything we do. In support of successive administrations, we will: ● act with integrity, propriety, and political impartiality, and select on merit ● put the public's interests first...

— Draft Values Statement,
"The Civil Service – Making a Difference"

COCK-UP CORNER

THE home office's claim that the number of unanswered calls to immigration service headquarters in Croydon has been cut from 5,000 a day to 1,000 is little comfort to callers such as John Barlow from West Sussex, whose passport, along with those of his Vietnamese wife and stepson, has been held for five and a half months.

He has succeeded in getting through on the phone just once since August only to be told his family's passports were "in transit".

Mrs Barlow arrived in the UK in July 1998 when a Heathrow immigration officer advised her to send her own passport and that of her 13-year-old son to the immigration department after she had been resident in the country for one year to obtain a permanent visa. Her husband's passport was also required for proof of identification.

Since last August Mr Barlow has written numerous letters to the immigration department and enlisted the help of his MP Laura Moffat to secure the return of his family's passports, with no response.

To complicate matters his step-daughter came to visit her mother in September on a six-month visitor's visa issued by the British embassy in Hanoi. This was reduced to three months by Heathrow immigration officers.

To gain a visa extension so that his step-daughter could stay with her family over Christmas, Mr Barlow was obliged to send her passport to... Croydon.

Surprisingly over three months later he has still received no response.

WELSH RABBIT

WHILE the Welsh assembly has become responsible for school inspections, it doesn't seem interested in what Estyn, its inspection agency, is doing.

Thanks to Estyn, which draws up inspection lists, Penrhys nursery school, in one of the poorest parts of the Rhondda, is facing an inspection this spring even though it achieved one of the highest standards in Wales when last inspected and therefore didn't need to be fully inspected again.

Sadly, this won't stop Estyn going ahead: it has a contract with a private company to carry out the inspection, which comes at a time when amalgamation with Penrhys infant and junior schools is already causing disruption, with staff having to apply for their own jobs and the whole school being relocated.

No one in the assembly has realised that the whole exercise is pointless because Penrhys nursery school will cease to exist next summer. Far more important to Estyn is the fact that it has a contract worth £8,000 with EPCC (Severn Crossing) Ltd, which employs inspectors who have had six weeks training but... no teaching experience. Never mind, the new school will be inspected again within 12 months as it will then be classified as a new school, allowing the new private inspection companies another bite of the cherry.

WHY was Plaid Cymru in such a hurry to call the Ceredigion by-election for 3 February, following the decision of MP Cynog Dafis to stand down in order to concentrate on being a member of the Welsh assembly?

Could it have anything to do with the fact that thousands of students of the University of Wales at Aberystwyth, most of whom hail from other parts of the United Kingdom and who would therefore be less likely to vote Plaid, are sitting exams that week? Or that the new electoral register does not come into play until later in the month, so first year students living in halls will not be able to vote this time round?

Surely not. For then people might think Plaid Cymru was a party of petty nationalists out to discriminate against non-Welsh voters. A preposterous idea!

SOUTER'S YOU, SIR!

STAGECOACH boss Brian Souter (see *Eyes passim*) has defended his donation of £500,000 to the campaign opposing Labour's plans to lift the ban on the teaching of homosexuality in the classroom, by describing himself as "a devout Christian".

Mr Souter's critics seem to feel that he should devote his energy to the practice of morality in a sphere nearer home, ie his company's business practices, described by the monopolies and mergers commission (now the competition commission) as "predatory, deplorable and against the public interest".

FOCUS ON UKIP

THE warring tribes of the UK Independence Party gathered at Westminster Central Hall last Saturday for a final showdown.

"One can only hope," we wrote in the last *Eye*, previewing the meeting, "that the St John's ambulance brigade is on standby." Lo and behold, one poor member had a heart attack, keeling over in front of the rostrum while debating a motion of no confidence in the national executive. Ambulancemen were quickly on the scene and administered mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

Even before this dramatic interlude, the hall had already been in some disorder – despite the best efforts of Norris McWhirter, who was chairing the event, to keep control. About 1,000 UKIP members attended and almost all wanted to let off steam at the internecine feuding of recent months (chronicled in *Eyes passim*). To the delight of party leader Michael Holmes MEP, they passed a motion of no confidence in the national executive by 642 votes to 245. To the delight of the executive, they then passed a motion of no confidence in Holmes as well, by 569 to 250.

After being asked to resign, the NEC duly did so – with the exception of two Holmes supporters, Mike Nattrass and Chris Cooke. Michael Holmes, however, showed no inclination to stand down despite having lost the confidence of his members.

Holmes's fellow-MEP Nigel Farage led the attack on his erstwhile ally. He accused Holmes and his sidekick Janet Girsman, an ex-Tory candidate, of leaking stories about him to the press. They were also alleged to have sabotaged his forthcoming appearance on *Question Time*, to be broadcast from Brussels on 3 February, by ringing the producer and demanding that Michael Holmes should appear instead. (The show's producer, understandably losing patience with the UKIP squabblers, eventually decided to use neither of them.)

Nigel Farage, in turn, was then savaged by Rodney Atkinson, brother of comedian Rowan, who made much of Farage's mysterious lunch in 1997 with Mark Deavin, a leading member of the British National Party. Atkinson's indignation surprised some observers: when the *Times* mentioned the Deavin lunch last summer Farage promptly consulted his solicitors, Messrs Carter-Fuck, about the possibility of suing for libel – and took Atkinson along with him to Carter-Fuck's office for moral support.

Where the party goes from here is anyone's guess. In view of the litigiousness of all concerned, further writs and lawsuits may ensue. If so, the only beneficiaries will be m'learned friends: Michael Holmes's recent unsuccessful high court action against the party's national executive has left him with a legal bill estimated at more than £40,000.

MAN IN THE EYE

WHEN *Newsnight*'s Jeremy Paxman recently grilled Professor Sir John Krebs, newly installed as head of the government's Food Standards Agency, about his qualifications for the job, Krebs looked mildly uncomfortable.

Announcing his appointment on 21 January, the department of health admitted that he had little knowledge of food safety or consumer issues, having spent the last 30 years in the markedly different discipline of academic zoology. The department insisted that ignorance was actually an advantage, since it meant he had "no baggage" and "no preconceptions". The same could be said, of course, had a child of four been chosen for the post. How, then, has Krebs risen to the giddy heights of the great and the good?

Being the offspring of a Nobel prizewinner, the biochemist Sir Hans Krebs, probably doesn't do any harm. Sir John inherited his fierce ambition from this side of the gene-line, telling friends that his only aim was to be as famous as his father. After taking a degree in zoology, he began the research that was to make his name.

The nature of this research is interesting in the light of his more recent notoriety as the man who proposed the government's current policy of testing whether badgers help spread bovine TB by carrying out a mass badger-cull. To find out how birds defend territories, Krebs wanted to remove several from their woodland habitats in Oxford and replace them with tape recorders playing birdsong. If the tapes repelled neighbours, then he could show that song is indeed used as a territorial signal. The problem was how to remove the birds who owned the experimental territories.

When he first wrote up his experiment, Krebs implied that he had shot the birds with a 12-bore. But later, when protesters were storming the monkey cages of Oxford and he was being lined up for a job as chief executive of the Natural Environment Research Council, the story changed somewhat: he suggested the birds had been simultaneously trapped in nets at dawn over several acres of woodland.

In the early 1970s, after collecting his D.Phil, Krebs spent a few years in North America where, under the influence of the brilliant theoretical biologist Eric Charnov, he found a new subject for research, optimal foraging, the question of whether birds tend to feed in the areas where, er, the feeding is best. All most interesting, but not of much use in his new job as food safety supremo.

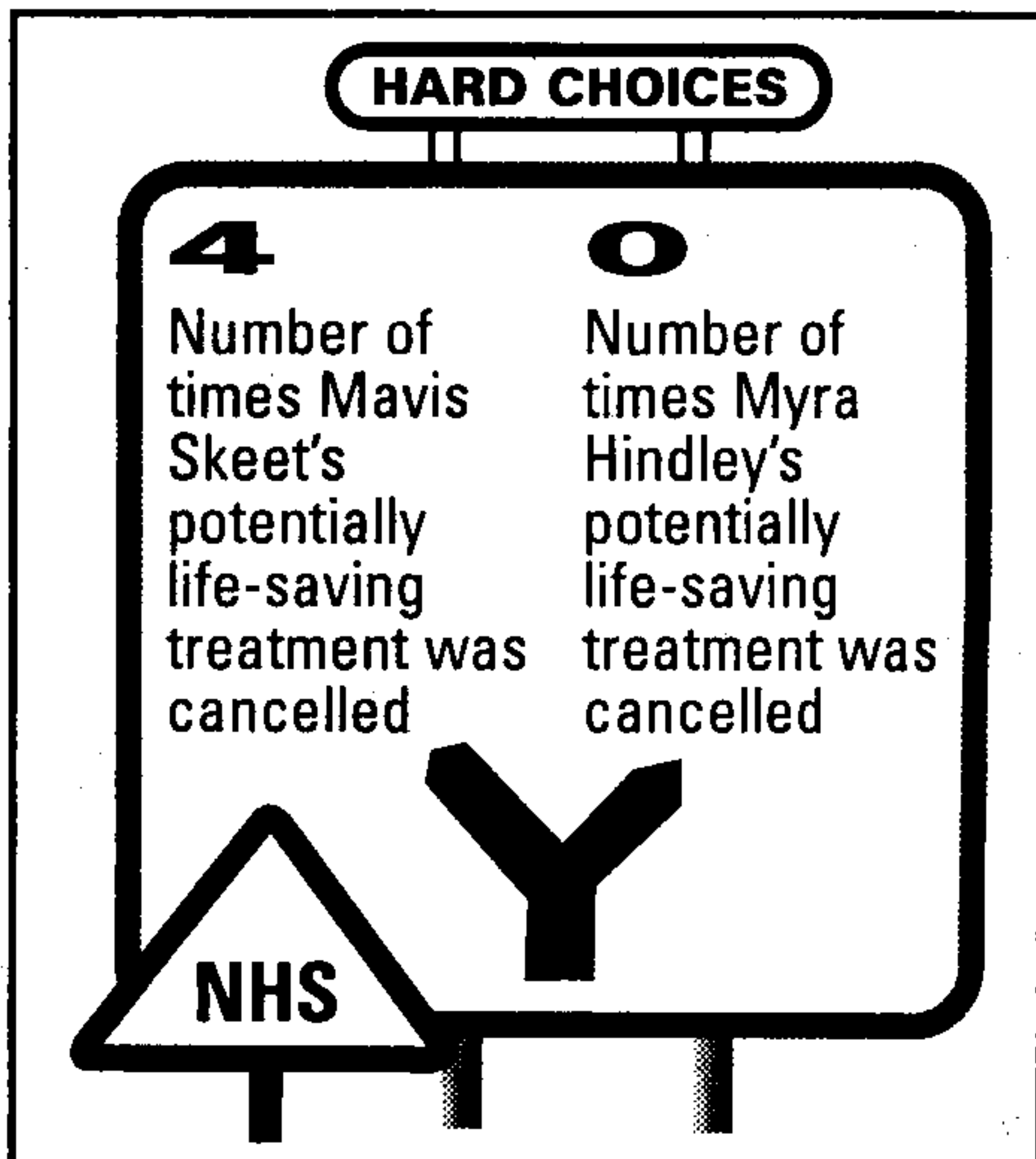
What of the controversial issue which he must now tackle, genetically modified nosh? On the day of his appointment, Krebs already felt able to assure Jeremy Paxman that present GM products "are as safe as their non-GM counter-products". And in a book issued last year by the right-wing Institute of Economic Affairs, he was quoted denouncing "the recent shrill, often ill-informed and dogma-driven objections to GM foods".

Can this really be the same man who, according to Whitehall, comes to his sensitive new job with "no preconceptions"? And does he have no preconceptions as to the behaviour of his old friend Sir Richard Southwood, who was chairman of the first committee that looked into the BSE crisis and said that the danger from using human vaccine containing bovine material was "remote"?

● See *In The Back*, 26.



"There's never an institutionalised racist around when you need one!"



TIME

So Farewell, then, John Birt...

AS A manager John Birt believed, when making decisions, in the virtues of orderly lists on sheets of paper. So let's begin by writing on one side what he has taken from the BBC in his eight years in charge.

He has taken a knighthood, a peerage and around £400,000 a year plus a sizeable pay-off, although the reasons for this severance payment are unclear as he has merely concluded a fixed-term contract: something which happens to thousands of his staff with no golden handshake on offer to them. What he won't be taking with him is much staff goodwill.

He may depart with a publisher's contract although the book bods summoned to his office to discuss terms are reported to be baulking at his insistence that the memoirs must be a trilogy with separate volumes dealing with Life, Broadcasting Career and Management Theories.

It's perfectly fitting though that Birt should be the first departing DG to offer triple-decker memoirs. Because — as we move on to the list of what he has given to the BBC — we see that he

has been a leader unnaturally obsessed with form over content.

Despite Birt's reputation as a control freak, no viewer or listener will ever understand just how little he had to do with actual programmes. There was an embarrassing moment at a BBC social function when Birt told a celebrity presenter how grateful the corporation was to have their programme, only to be furiously told that the show had been axed two years before. "I'm sorry. I don't really watch television," he blinkingly apologised.

His direct interventions in programming were rare and only three of them had a serious effect on what viewers saw and heard. It was Birt who instructed the drama department to concentrate on costume classic adaptations. It was Birt's friendship with Sir David Frost which ensured that yesterday's frontman maintained his lucrative Sunday morning show long after his increasing familiarity with politicians and decreasing familiarity with the autocue made his show an embarrassment. And it was Birt who encouraged the circulation of a childish and self-defeating ban on references to his chum Peter Mandelson's private life after Mandy was outed on *Newsnight*.

BIRT SPEAK

Beyond that, his interventions in the schedules were curiously trivial. It is said that it was the DG himself who insisted that Barry Davies rather than the usual first choice John Motson would commentate on the world cup final. And Birt's obsession with the "mission to explain" led directly to a few series of late-night BBC2 shows — fronted first by Andrew Marr and then Evan Davies — in which Big Thinkers outlined their ideas for the future.

And, er... that's it. As a DG Birt remained commendably hands-off from the knobs on the television set.

The main commissioning executives to emerge at the corporation during Birt's watch — Alan Yentob, Michael Jackson, Mal Young — were in no sense Birtists and generally spent the licence fee on programmes which did not fit his wider theories.

"I was not born to be content," Birt declared portentously in a valedictory interview in the *New Statesman* magazine. But the interviewer Ian Hargreaves almost certainly mis-transcribed the tape. "I was not born to do content" seems a much more plausible mission statement.

No: what mattered to Birt was structures. A story is told that when his chum Tony Blair summoned him for advice shortly after Labour's 1997 victory, Birt gave no policy insights but excitedly sketched on a piece of paper how the existing departments of state might be reorganised into three super-ministries, thereby increasing the power of the centre.

DALEK-GENERAL

The only man with an engineering degree ever to head the BBC, Birt viewed it essentially as a structural puzzle. Birt's introduction of an "internal market" — in which a producer would theoretically "buy" a studio from an employee of the same organisation in a neighbouring office — led many of his staff to assume initially that he was a right-wing market obsessive. When the DG was revealed to be a social democrat and Friend of Tony, all became clear. He liked an internal market because it allowed the drawing of diagrams in which lots of boxes had arrows leading to lots of other boxes.

It was the same with his other innovation. Dividing the BBC into two different halves — broadcast and production — makes no artistic sense and little political logic (except as a prelude to a possible privatisation which had

receded anyway as an option by the time he did it) but it makes a beautiful diagram.

In his headiest days of power, Birt liked to compare his reforms to the privatisation of industry under Margaret Thatcher. The new structures would become so logical, economic and monolithic that no successor could unpick them. In fact, Greg Dyke's first act in office will be to remove Birt's swathe of middle-management and probably to dismantle the division between broadcast and production. The great engineer will leave no trace of his structures on the place.

Even so, only a shop steward or cultural Luddite would conclude that Birt was entirely unnecessary. The BBC he joined in 1989 as deputy-DG was over-staffed and complacent and filled with crews who did little work and producers writing books on licence-free salaries. And the corporation faced a Thatcher government determined to destroy it.

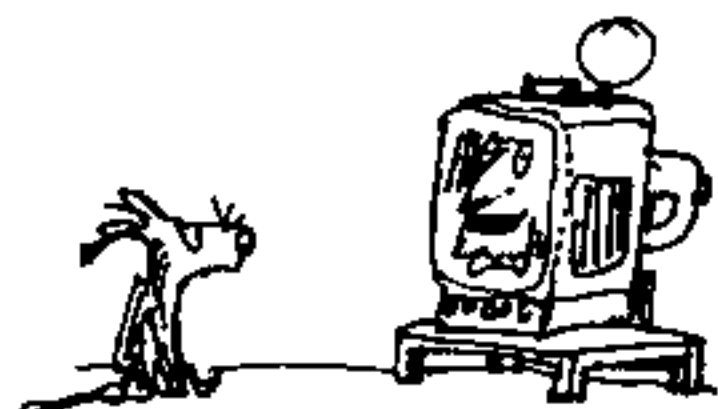
Birt significantly improved the news coverage — the job he was first hired to do — but greatly over-estimated the need for structural reform. By the time he became DG, Thatcher had been replaced by the weak John Major, whose only real interest in the BBC was that it kept the rights to cricket. And Rupert Murdoch — expected at the time to destroy the BBC by his competition — in fact saved the corporation in the short-term by reminding the public that it wanted the classy, high-budget programming which only the BBC provides.

Birt never had much time for programme-makers. But at least they leave a little shelf of videos or cassettes when they go. He — to the great surprise and relief of all who feared him for so long — has left almost nothing behind.

'Square Eyes'



MEDIA NEWS



ONE prominent name missing from the list of useless BBC middle managers ripe for sacking from the news directorate in Greg Dyke's spring clean is that of the head of news himself, Tony "Quisling" Hall.

The only reason he's not on page one of this *Book of the Dead* is that the list was drawn up by Hall in a frantic attempt to pre-empt his own demise by shopping his juniors and buying himself time to find another job at least as well upholstered as the one he holds for now.

But the scam won't last long. It's well known that Dyke holds robust contempt for the owl-like Hall, who was fast-tracked into his present glory direct from Oxford and an immensely dull treatise about the coal industry, bypassing any immersion in the muck of the

real world — and Dyke responds to muck.

Hall has been a visible failure. It was he who brought Birt's bimodal crusade to "fruition". It cost millions and has been abandoned because it doesn't work. It was Hall who stripped Broadcasting House of its broadcasting equipment, vandalising a much loved building to make room for plush offices for Birt's army of unloved suits. It cost millions and has proved a disaster.

Even before Dyke's appointment Hall's minions were already looking (on the quiet) at alternative central London locations to rehouse expensively and needlessly evicted hacks. Hall could perhaps claim to be a slavish victim of his master Birt's will. After all, it's hard to find anyone at the BBC who was further up Birt's arse (apart from Matthew Bannister). But Hall himself clearly knows the game's up. When he appeared recently with Dyke in the newsroom to patronise the demoralised troops, Hall was observed taking care to be on the opposite side of the room from Dyke at all times.

LUVVIES

"I'm sure everybody's done it; you lie in bed at night and think, 'What if so-and-so was in a car crash?' and 20 minutes later you're sobbing. That's my job, I do that all the time, it's kind of nuts, really."

EMILY WATSON
Sunday Telegraph

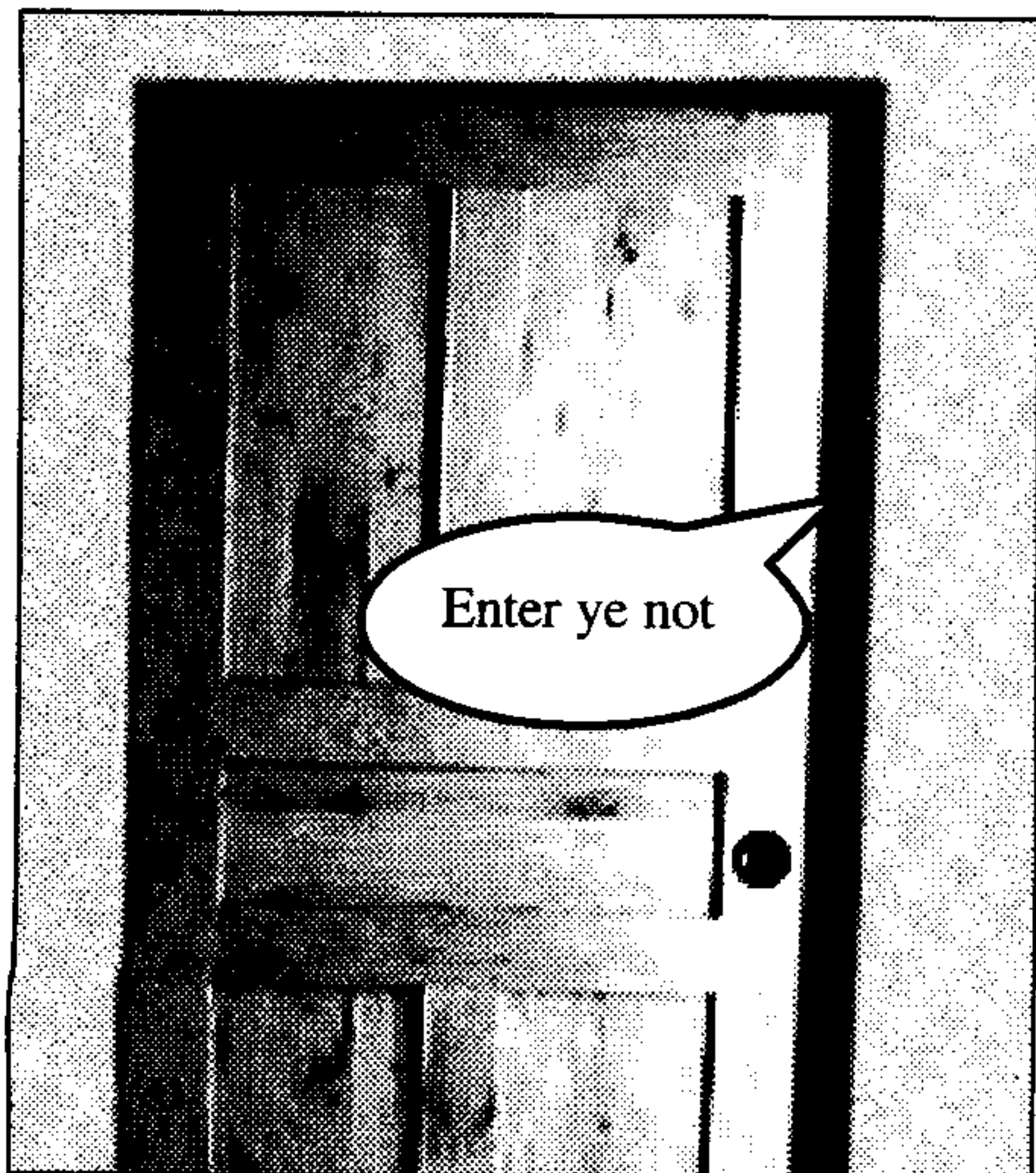
I was put through a mangle and loved every moment. My heart is in the stage. It just happened that I did films and TV, but you have to work."

BRONAGH GALLAGHER
Time Out

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore



Frankie Howerd Hughes

JAMES BOYLE – also known as McBirt – has marked his resignation from Radio 4 by sending all its producers and presenters a memo boasting of his “great success” at the station. It is headed, simply: “Mission Accomplished.”

More modestly still, he attaches a page of quotes taken from listeners’ letters: “You’re doing a great job... Thank you for helping to enrich my life and that of my family... You’re the best Controller ever.”

Alas! Almost everyone who received McBirt’s preening missive last week assumed it must be a spoof.

NO ONE in the BBC is surprised to hear that **Mark Laity**, the corporation’s defence correspondent, will be joining cockney sparrer **Jamie Shea** as his deputy spokesman at Nato HQ in Brussels. All that remains to be settled is the size of his salary: Laity has been holding out for something over £100,000.

When rumours of the new job began circulating two weeks ago, a BBC spokesman claimed Laity was absent with flu. How odd, then, that the supposedly bed-ridden hack was seen the next day at a grand dinner hosted by General Sir Roger Wheeler, chief of the general staff. The truth, it seems, is that since his credibility as an independent reporter was now zero, the BBC decided there was no longer any point in his turning up for work.

Laity earned notoriety for his creepily deferential questions at Shea’s daily “briefings” during Nato’s gremlin-plagued bombing campaign in Kosovo – and for his own unofficial briefings to the more gullible of his colleagues, based on his immense experience of combat in the Territorial Army.

Like many “defence correspondents”, Laity has something of an obsession with military hardware. His desk at the BBC was littered with tacky miniature statues of British fighting men, model tanks and aeroplanes. On one occasion, the BBC’s jobsworths on the gate called the police when a man was seen brandishing a gun in the car park; it turned out to be Laity, playing with a replica AK47.

Plugged In

WHERE better to attack the extra £12 a year tax on owning a digital television than in the *Sun*?

“The Beeb has already wasted £77 million on News 24, its terrible news channel nobody watches. Now it plans a BBC digital Sports Channel... using your money... A hike in the licence fee coupled with the digitax is simply unfair. Blair must understand that the message it would send out is that Britain is no place to do business.”

The Sun, Monday 17 January

IN THE London entertainment world the fame of precocious party-organiser **Justin Etzin** (see *Eye* 993) has spread beyond his dazzling teenybopper guest lists (Prince William, Euan Blair, et al) to the small matter of paying his bills.

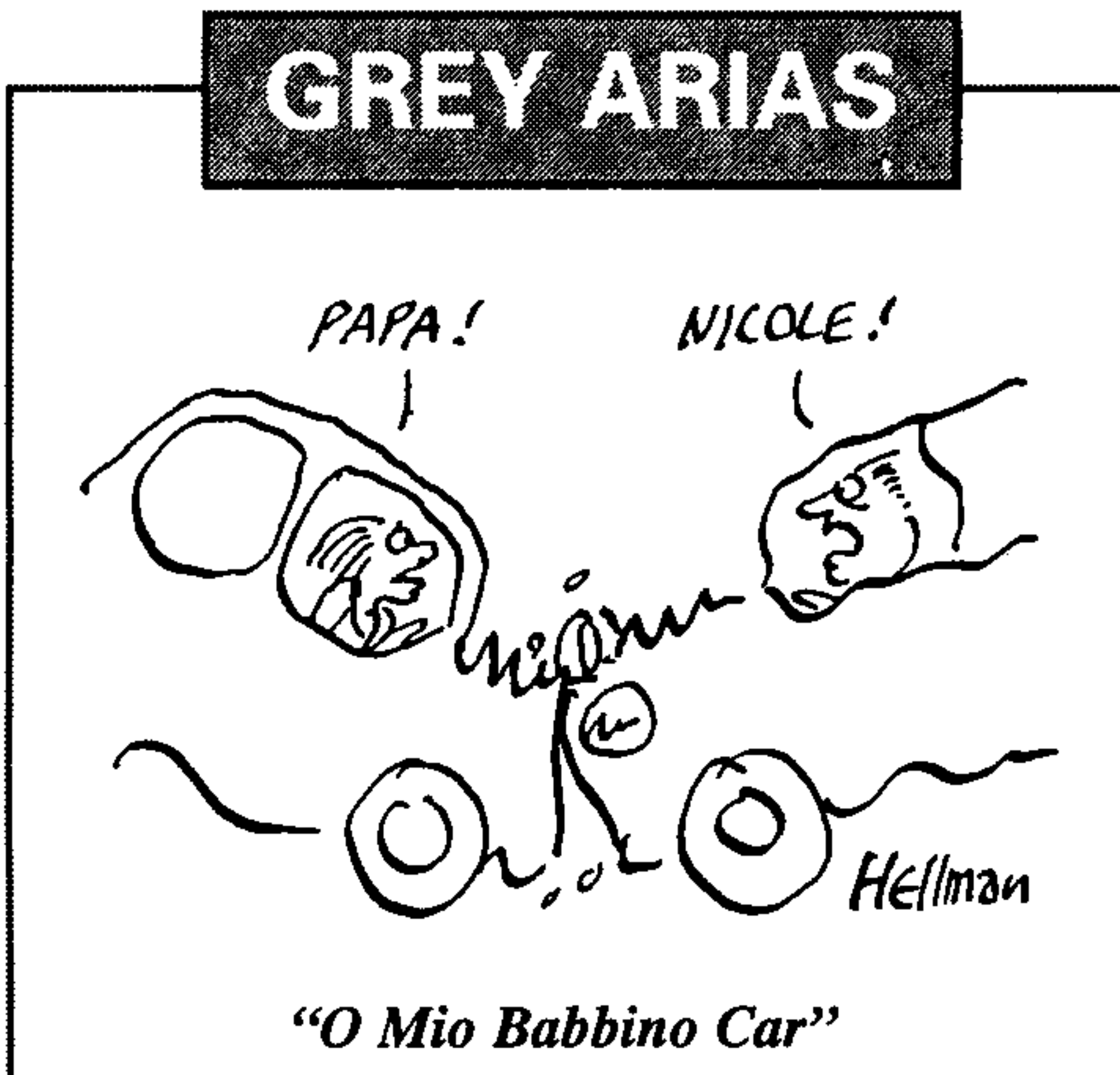
Back in February 1997 Etzin booked the Shepherds Bush Empire for two consecutive nights to hold a pair of Valentine balls for the under 18s.

Even before the party commenced the silver-tongued Etzin persuaded the Empire to bend the rules a little in his favour. Instead of paying for the venue in advance he made a deposit of around one fifth of the price and promised to pay the rest on the night. He wouldn’t let the Empire box office sell a percentage of the tickets as usual, but guaranteed his own company would sell the full quota of 1,000 tickets for each night.

At the first ball, attended by a measly 300 teenagers, Etzin said he was too busy to write out a cheque for what he owed and departed suddenly without having paid in the early hours. His entourage reassured managers he would settle in full the following night.

The next day, however, the Empire’s managers received a phone call cancelling the second event. They have not seen sight nor sound of Etzin (or their money) since.

GREY ARIAS



STAFF and musicians at English National Opera are dismayed at having lost a rare opportunity to stage Wagner’s *Ring* cycle because of the luvvyish rivalry between ENO’s past and present musical directors.

The company was offered £1m towards staging the *Ring* by a private benefactor “on condition that the conductor was Mark Elder, the ENO’s musical director from 1979 to 1992”, and not the present incumbent, Paul Daniel. Elder, now at the Halle, has made guest appearances at the ENO before, including conducting Wagner’s *Parsifal* last year. “It has been almost embarrassing to witness the way the orchestra revives its best form the moment he appears in the pit,” noted Rupert Christiansen in the *Telegraph*. Elder’s popularity with the musicians has certainly not been lost on Daniel, who has never won the same respect from the troops.

Daniel has made it clear that, if the *Ring* is ever to be performed at the ENO during his tenure, it is he who must wield the baton. Fair enough, said the anonymous donor – no Elder, no *Ring*.

JAMES O’BRIEN, showbiz editor of the *Express*, had a tremendous front-page “exclusive” on 15 January.

“The BBC today stands accused of squandering millions of pounds of licence-payers’ money,” he thundered, revealing that the corporation had still not found a suitable project for Vanessa Feltz even though it was paying her £1m a year. “The *Express* has established that none of the pilot programmes made for her last year has been commissioned.”

Alas! On the very same day, both the *Daily Mail* and *Mirror* reported that in fact the BBC was commissioning a new series to be presented by the lovely Vanessa.

How did O’Brien get it wrong? And can he by any chance be related to the James O’Brien who auditioned as co-host on one of Vanessa’s pilot programmes last year but was then rejected?

STAFF at the British Museum are threatening to strike for the first time in the institution’s 246-year history.

As the *Independent on Sunday* reported last weekend, they have been provoked beyond endurance by their new managing director Suzanna Taverne, who is forcing through a programme of “savage cost-cutting” and redundancies.

The *Sindie* article referred to la Taverne several times as a “former investment banker” but neglected to mention her other achievements – particularly in the early 1990s when she established her cost-cutting reputation while working as financial director of, er, the *Indie* and *Sindie*.

NOOKS AND CORNERS

OUR museum and gallery buildings are always at the mercy of the whims and prejudices of directors, who mutilate them or restore them according to taste. This can be no bad thing when it means a new director ripping out the false ceilings, white hessian and other tat to recreate a once-glorious interior, as Tim Clifford did at Manchester and then Edinburgh. But not always.

In 1990 the architect Roderick Gradidge was commissioned by the National Portrait Gallery to restore and enhance the rather dreary entrance hall and staircase, an uncompleted work by Ewan Christian in a vaguely neo-Norman style.

The carpet was lifted to expose a mosaic floor; the walls cleverly decorated in a Victorian manner by Christopher Boulter; new mahogany revolving doors installed and fine new light fittings hung. The result was impressive and appropriate. But now, less than a decade later, all this good work (done at taxpayer’s expense) has been destroyed by the new director, Charles Saumarez Smith: the decoration painted out, the doors and lights removed.

The ostensible reason is the creation of new gallery space beyond the staircase by Dixon Jones Architects, but the two interiors could surely have coexisted. Modern architecture and minimalism is now smart again, of course, but when I learn that the entrance hall is not to be done over by Dixon & Jones but tarted up by the modish interior decorator, that courtier to the rich David Mlinaric, I can only conclude that the new director is a mere creature of fashion – and out-of-date fashion at that.

‘Piloti’

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER



DOING THE ROUNDS

"NEW" Labour's immediate solution to this year's NHS winter crisis has been to shut the whistleblowing Lord Winston up with the threat of a complaint to the General Medical Council (for divulging that Cherie has decided not to try pushing and panting) and to try to shut up the rest of the NHS by paying them off.

Alas, trusts have been told that the above inflation rise, which averages 3.4 percent, has to come out of existing budgets. As a consultant at Queen Mary's hospital in Sidcup put it: "If you add in the additional employers' contributions for national insurance and superannuation, a district general hospital with a budget of £60m will face an additional wage bill of £1.5m. Hospitals will either have to reduce staffing levels by 3.5 percent or trim the non-pay services by 10 percent."

The reality could be even worse since health secretary Alan Milburn believes the pay rises must be heavily publicised to attract staff back into the service. The additional cost of filling the 5 percent vacancy rate and paying recruits at the new rate could mean a cut in drugs, supplies, equipment and power in each hospital of up to 12 percent for the year 2000/2001. The alternative for trust finance managers is to say "sod it", go heavily into debt and pray the government will bail them out before the next election.

Tony Blair's longterm plans appear equally dodgy. Hoping to increase the percentage of our gross domestic product (GDP) spent on health from 6.7 percent to the European average of 8 percent in five years falls at the first hurdle. The 8 percent figure is based on three-year-old research from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the true average now is nearer 8.7 percent. This is likely to increase further over the five years Blair spends trying to catch up and, as anyone vaguely numerate will have spotted, the UK's extra funding will raise the average still further. The biggest con, however, is to link the increased funding to the unpredictable state of the economy, rather than firm tax increases. In effect only the rhetoric is guaranteed.

Still, the NHS needs every penny it can get and Winston is to be congratulated for at least panicking Blair into promising billions. Quite why the good Lord felt he had to retract his comments remains a mystery. Any genuine concern he raises about the NHS is protected by the public interest disclosure act, which became law last July to prevent the persecution of whistleblowers. Perhaps Alastair Campbell hasn't read it.

Everyone knows Cherie Blair had a caesarean section last time round and so is highly likely to have

POP-IN CLINK



another given her age. This amounts to nothing more than informed speculation and — given that Winston is not in any way involved in her medical care — this does not constitute a breach of confidentiality.

Alas, politicians suffused with self-importance seem incapable of making this distinction. In July 1998, Gregor Mackay, then press secretary to William Hague, reported M.D. directly to the General Medical Council for disrespectful speculation about the leader of the opposition's prolonged absence from work. "I thought it highly unprofessional and a poor advert for your profession," fumed Mackay, who was sacked shortly afterwards. After due consideration, the GMC concluded that as I have never been Mr Hague's doctor, my comments were of no interest to them. Ditto Lord Winston and Cherie. Even if she's having it on all fours in Lord Archer's jacuzzi.

In fact it is nurses who stand to benefit most from Mr Blair's pay rise, but there's no sign of gagging in the *Nursing Times*. As community nurse Barbara Mathews from Swansea writes: "I am frequently appalled by the basic lack of nursing care for some of my older patients in hospital. They develop painful pressure sores that take months to heal. Drinks are placed out of reach, false teeth not cleaned, food left untouched. I know staff numbers were low, but they always were."

And that's the point. This winter has been no different to any winter in the NHS in terms of the levels of staff and sickness. However, many NHS staff swallowed "new" Labour's trite "Things Can Only Get Better" line and believed that, a few years into office, they genuinely would. The fact that so little has changed in the NHS has led to widespread disillusionment, with a knock on effect on patient care. Lord Winston is just the tip of a very angry iceberg.

M.D.

DOWN ON THE FARM

MORE on Eville and Jones, the Leeds-based company whose New Zealand-born business brain Jason Aldiss wrote to the last *Eye* defending the fortune his firm makes from hiring out Spanish and other foreign vets to the Meat Hygiene Service to enforce European union (EU) hygiene rules.

His claim that there was a "welcome" for the "input" of these vets, many of whom scarcely speak English and seem to know strikingly little about either animals or hygiene, prompted hollow laughter in the meat trade.

Having cleverly spotted that there would be a shortage of British vets willing to do the work when Britain was forced to accept the continental system of meat inspection by "veterinaires", E and J has enlarged its ambitions. It has linked up with the US corporate giant Companion Care Inc — better known as "the Wal-Mart of the veterinary business" for the hundreds of outlets it has opened in "pet superstores" and supermarkets, catering for the highly lucrative market providing veterinary services to domestic pets (or "companion animals", as they are known in PC America).

A hefty chunk of profits comes from "tie ins" negotiated with the makers of veterinary medicines. And a key to success lies in finding a ready supply of cheap vets to run the "in store" operations. E and J is ideally placed to help with this. Not the least reason Spanish vets have been queuing to work in Britain's meat industry is that, once they have found employment here, under EU rules they must be accorded the status of a fully-qualified professional vet, even if they lack many of the usual British qualifications.

A while back the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons strongly objected to this and tried to withdraw its recognition of Spanish veterinary degrees. But it was told this was illegal. So any Spanish vet recruited to work in the meat industry is now free to move on and set up as a full veterinary surgeon anywhere in the country — or take a job in one of Companion Care and E and J's new cut-price "vet shops".

Why should this worry farmers? Most rural veterinary practices are only kept viable by the income they make from looking after domestic pets. The Rover and Tibbles market makes it possible to continue tending sick cows and pigs. If this market is severely eroded by competition from new supermarket vets, what remains of the James Herriot world may soon disappear forever. Then the calves will just have to learn to shoot themselves.

'Even Newer Muckspreader'

Mr Baxter, 42, who lives with his 11-year-old son Jonathan at the farm in Winterton, near Scunthorpe, blames the industry's collapse on the break-up of his marriage. 'Your domestic situation is affected by your financial position and this crisis was the final straw for us,' he said.

— Interview with Lincolnshire farmer Malcolm Baxter on the demise of pig farming, *Daily Mail*, 11 January 2000.

SIGNAL FAILURES

Virgin's uneconomic passengers

WHILE Britain's roads are choked with traffic and people choke on the resulting pollution, Virgin Trains is pricing travellers out of the main alternative.

The company runs the country's least punctual franchises but celebrated the new year with fares increases similar to those of September 1999... and May 1999, er, and January 1999. "Passengers are paying through the nose for a service which does not meet their legitimate expectations," complained Philip Davies, of the official Midlands rail users' committee, to no avail.

Rail passengers are not the only ones paying through the nose. The service broke even or made a small profit under British Rail, but taxpayers will hand Virgin more than £59m to run it this year.

To take just one example of Virgin fares, a return from Stafford to Euston now costs £99.50 — not first class but standard. Virgin has run the route for less than three years, but in that time the Stafford fare has jumped more than 42 percent. If Virgin feels the increase is justified while it fails to provide anything approaching an acceptable service, what will happen if the service improves with the advent of new trains and less bumpy track in a few years' time? Even at the *current* rate of increase, the Stafford to Euston return will cost well over £400 by the end of Virgin's franchise in 2012. The people of Stafford can forget any thought of a rival train operator coming to their rescue with a cheaper service: Virgin has been given absolute protection from competition on the Euston route for the duration of its franchise.

Virgin's usual excuse is that cheaper book-ahead seats are available for the poor. It refuses to say how many are allocated on any train, but one *Eye* reader found this out when he was told in September he could no longer get his usual £20 or £30 book-ahead return for the 5.20am from Manchester to Euston but would have to pay £129 instead (since increased to £150). The reader complained and three months later Linda Vann, of Virgin customer relations, wrote back to explain: "We have recently taken the decision to remove advance purchase fare availability from morning peak trains on all west coast routes."

The reason? Because some business travellers had been buying the cheaper tickets. She added: "So even though some morning peak trains are quiet, it is still uneconomic for us to offer the cheaper tickets on these services. I would encourage you to travel a little later if you can only make the journey on a discounted ticket."

The 5.20 from Manchester has hundreds of seats... but the disappointed reader has now seen it depart with about 10 or 15 passengers on board.

There can be no sharper illustration why Tony Blair, John Prescott and the shadow strategic rail authority (last *Eye*) are misguided if they think private firms will solve Britain's transport crisis. The capacity that already exists on the country's busiest route is not always fully utilised because Virgin's policy is to maximise profits rather than passengers carried.

The rail authority, however, must be impressed by this unabashed greed: it is now seriously considering handing the King's Cross to Edinburgh service to Virgin. If that nightmare comes true, presumably Newcastle, Leeds and York will see breathtaking fares rises and their most useful services deliberately emptied of uneconomic riffraff.

PS: Ticket clerks are exasperated by Virgin's ever-changing fares but Virgin is unsympathetic. A memo leaked by one clerk shows how Virgin cocked-up by failing to erase book-ahead single fares from ticket machines when they were axed last year.

That abolition made one-way tickets much dearer than the cheapest returns often available. Virgin's anonymous memo warned clerks not to try any funny business (ie honesty) to help customers because Big Brother Branson was watching: "Retailers should endeavour not to sell Virgin Value return tickets for single journeys even if they are cheaper than the available walk-up single fare." Disobedient clerks would be "identified".

Ticket clerks should always offer the cheapest ticket for any journey but after being threatened by Virgin, some even refused to sell return tickets to passengers who had originally requested a single. Once the clerks had got their heads around this tangle Virgin announced it was, er, reinstating the book-ahead single fares.

'Dr B. Ching'

■ ROTTEN BOROUGH ■



WHITE BASTARDS

DURHAM city council paid its former principal safety officer Mac Williams £6,500 last week on the eve of an employment tribunal at which he would have told of years of racial abuse at the hands of senior colleagues. Williams settled after witnesses told him they feared for their jobs if they testified on his behalf.

The council's chief personnel officer Ron Henderson, according to colleagues, was in the habit of referring to Williams as "the blackie at Byland Lodge" (the council's HQ), while director of operations Dave Marrs was wont to quip: "Look up, here comes a dark cloud." Cllr Mildred Brown, now Labour's deputy leader, apologised to Williams after asking him: "What's the matter with you, you black bastard?"

Mild-mannered Williams endured such taunts for years, until he complained about Marrs to the then deputy chief executive Colin Shearsmith [see *Eyes passim*] in 1997. Shearsmith promised to "attend to the matter". Williams was seeking nothing more than an apology. Only after another two years of inaction from Shearsmith, now chief executive, did he bring his tribunal case. Needless to say, no officer has been disciplined and no apology has been forthcoming.

CREAKY CLEAN

FRESH chaos in Doncaster, where deputy leader Mike Farrington has been arrested and questioned about his expenses.

Farrington was a "Project 99" regionally approved candidate at last year's local elections, meant to ensure a squeaky-clean "new regime". So far eight of the new "clean" candidates have been arrested and/or convicted. The party of zero toleration of incompetence must be wondering how its full-time officials keep cocking it up so badly.

After the first detailed allegations about planning irregularities in the borough came out in July 1997 a number of councillors were suspended by the regional party. One was John Quinn, councillor for Rossington and chair of the recreation committee. Fellow councillor Marie Lane revealed that she had been approached by Quinn on behalf of a developer, Alan Hughes, in respect of a rejected housing development in her ward. She complained of "a culture where senior councillors were at the beck and call of certain developers".

Quinn was also a strong supporter of the Rossington Hall development, a 2,300-acre golf course/executive housing venture which earned local surveyor and Rossington Labour party chairman Malcolm Clarke £440,000 in consultancy fees. The developer was a Newcastle-based company owned by Newcastle United director Douglas Hall [*Eyes passim*].

Quinn successfully appealed against his suspension. A regional official declared: "We believe that John Quinn's conduct does not merit further investigation... in his case there is no evidence of wrongdoing." The appeal panel was chaired by Newcastle council's deputy leader Kevan Jones, a frequent guest in the Newcastle United directors' box.

Now police are investigating another case of Quinn's alleged intervention in the planning process. They want to know why Hughes was charged thousands of pounds less by the council for the restoration of woodland at the site of one of his developments than the work actually cost. Hughes, planning chair Peter Birks and planning officer Graham Raynor have all since been arrested, along with Birks's partner, Stephanie Higginson, who has admitted being given a £175,000 farmhouse by Hughes.

Documentary evidence of the relationship between Quinn, Hughes and Birks was sent to Nan Sloane, the

regional officer in charge of the Labour party's inquiry into the Donnygate scandal. Copies were sent to Bev Marshall, Doncaster's chief whip; and to Howard Knight, Millbank's local government supremo. North & Yorkshire regional boss Andrew Sharpe was informed. No action was taken.

Instead Sharpe and Sloane were promoted. Kevan Jones has been placed on Labour's parliamentary candidates list. Quinn has just passed the Project 2000 test and will be a candidate in May's elections. And whistleblower Marie Lane has been rejected as unsuitable to stand as a candidate for the Squeaky Clean party.

● **MEANWHILE** the police and CPS are keen to press ahead with further Donnygate prosecutions, despite a comment by Judge Jonathan Crabtree at York crown court that expenses fiddling charges against former council leader Malcolm Glover were "scraping the barrel". There was speculation that if Glover's prosecution was dropped, other forthcoming cases might collapse. Crabtree has a history of leniency towards Donnygate defendants, with a preference for community service rather than jail. Doncaster residents will be relieved to hear that the prosecutions are to continue — and it appears unlikely Judge Crabtree will be hearing any of them.

SPOT THE ECO-THUG

BROMLEY'S director of leisure Robbie Stoakes, who recently made a speech in favour of concreting over 12 acres of Crystal Palace park to accommodate a 20-screen cinema and huge rooftop car park (*Eye* 993) has the full backing of his former boss.

Departing chief executive Dr Michael Blanch, off to be chief exec of the Falkland Islands, took the opportunity of a farewell speech to councillors to smear peaceful protesters who have objected to the scheme as "eco thugs". By an amazing coincidence, the Falklands has been having an environmental row of its own. A Stanley conservationist, Mike Bingham, who pointed out that the local penguin population had dramatically declined due to oil spills and the depletion of food stocks as a result of industrial-scale fishing, has been subjected to an extraordinary sequence of abuse, anonymous phone threats and trumped-up criminal accusations. Evidently the kelpers share Dr Blanch's distaste for environmentalists. He should feel at home there.

TORY VALUES

THE residents of Ashford Hill, a hamlet near Basingstoke, were appalled when they learned that one of their neighbours had sold his house to a developer who proposed to rip it down and build seven new "executive homes" in its place.

Then they learned that the same firm, Thames Vale Homes, planned to build another eight houses on an adjoining paddock. As there are only some 50 houses in the 1000-year-old settlement, such a development would alter the place's character for ever. Yet it is backed by Tory Basingstoke & Deane council's planning department, despite being contrary to the council's own "one for one" rebuilding rule.

The residents turned to their local Tory ward councillor, John Phillips, to put their case. But he said he wouldn't help because the owner of one of the development sites, McDonald Milner, is the local Tory agent. So they turned to their other ward councillor, Rose Welman, also a Tory. She refused as well, "declaring an interest" but declining to say what it was. They then appealed to a third Tory, Margaret Weston, who represents an outside ward. She said she would help... then changed her mind. So much for representative democracy.

● **SOUTHWARK'S** director of education for the last 10 years, Gordon Mott, has been caught bunking off work early with a fat cheque in his back pocket.

Mott "walked" after getting wind that Ofsted was to issue a report into Southwark's schools which would recommend that the useless education authority be privatised. Mott's departure received the blessing of Niall Duffy, leader of the Labour council, who is also quitting, having sanctioned a £100,000 payoff and enhanced pension for Mott. The top job has now gone to St Giles ward councillor, Stephanie Elsy, whose qualifications include having been for the last 18 months Southwark's chair of, er, education.

Pseud's Corner

If you have sporting blood in your veins, you will be savouring the expectation of this crispy morsel, this esculent slice of sporting life, this perfectly baked footballing dish. And it is pure vindaloo. The fact is that you simply can't have a meaningless match between these two nations, any more than you can have a dull one. This is a match-up heavy with the past. It is one that, to quote a favourite Powellism, drives a relatively deep fissure through the variegated seams of time.

SIMON BARNES
(England v. Germany)
The Times

I don't even like puddings, but this was an unbelievable concoction of textures and flavours; they were bursting and singing and whooping all over the place. It was like a thrilling firework display, becoming louder, brighter and more beautiful every minute you watched, getting better and better when you thought that it couldn't, then exploding into a moving, uplifting finale.

SIÓN SIMON
The Spectator

Shoes will be the single most important thing to wear over the next century. They not only have a strong EXPRESSIVENESS, they also contribute to how you move and how you want to be perceived. Through shoes you are in direct contact with the earth.

JIL SANDER
Vogue

But even though we like FRIENDS and shopping and will be going to lots of parties over the next few weeks, it doesn't mean we aren't thinking about the state of the world on the eve of the 21st century.

If *Marie Claire* is about anything, it is about how to enjoy life to the full without forgetting those who don't have the opportunities we have.

ELIZABETH JONES
Marie Claire

Subliminally, I was inhaling the smell of John Malkovich, and all those neurocircuits in my brain were fizzing. He's an instant rush. He doesn't say much at first. He's a master of the inordinately long pause and of slow, rhythmical speech. Sometimes you're lost in the labyrinthine dialogue because the voice is so warm and it comes like a duvet wrapping itself about you.

CHRISSY ILEY
Sunday Times Magazine

The stage set for the Pet Shop Boys World Tour 2000 moves beyond the boundaries of a tradition based on horizontal-vertical dichotomies. Inspired by a diversity of character and variety in size of the stage venues an ever-evolving synthetic landscape emerges which from its compact beginning gradually expands and transforms into a catalogue of frozen choreographies complementing the Pet Shop Boys' soundscapes. As the object metamorphoses into a landscape a dynamic almost independent process adds another temporal layer to the concept-narrative itself.

ZAHA HADID
Programme notes, Pet Shop Boys tour



URINE SAMPLE

Fusing involuntary loss of control with deliberate action, piss is invested with playful and unforeseen motives in this programme. The works revel in the contradictory acts of losing oneself and marking territory — directing us, with bravura, to a realm where the body is both transcended and redefined.

Lux Cinema
Islington programme

CONTRIBUTORS: Nick Reyland, Peter Mellini, Belinda Hull, E.J. Lindsay, Euan McSherry, Rob Coldwell, S.D. McAuliffe.

£10 paid for entries

Letters



Tessa account

Sir,

The letter from The Rt Hon Tessa Jowell (Eye 993) surprised me.

Ms Jowell affirms that "I do not think that anyone who knew me would describe me as a 'leftwinger'..."

Back in the late 1970s and early 80s, I was one of many insignificant footsoldiers in the Labour party in the borough of Camden. Tessa was one of our prominent councillors.

We saw ourselves as a decidedly "left" party in all three constituencies and at borough level, often critical of the Callaghan government and the rightwing "old Labour" hierarchy.

I cannot recall a single occasion when Tessa opposed the generally leftist stance of the Hampstead CLP. To me and others she always appeared to be in harmony with the constituency party and the left leadership on the borough council. Indeed, she appeared to us to be quite supportive of our candidate in the 1979 general election, who was also a colleague of hers on the council and for several years chair of housing, one Cllr K. Livingstone.

Yours faithfully,
PETER GRESHAM,

Via e-mail.

Life's a lottery?

Sir,

How nice it was of you to publish a letter from the Director Social Responsibility Camelot plc, Sue Slipman.

I was wondering what this most versatile woman was currently doing.

I seem to recall her past incarnations as a champion of utility companies' consumers; a spokesperson for a single parent pressure group; a member of the unlamented SDP; and her first claim to fame as a prominent communist in the NUS.

How ironic then that the grandly named and no doubt entirely superfluous chameleon should come full circle, as a communist she was presumably trying to ensure wealth redistribution from the rich to the poor; working for Camelot she is now ensuring wealth is redistributed from the poor to the rich.

Are there no ends to her talents?

Yours, cynically as ever,
JONATHAN HULL,

London E17.

Kiwi query

Sir,

Was horrified to read about the erratic use of methylpred in spinal injuries. I work in a small (4 MOs, 1 consultant) hospital here in the backblocks of New Zealand's south island and we've been using it for five to six years. I thought we were the ones who were supposed to be behind.

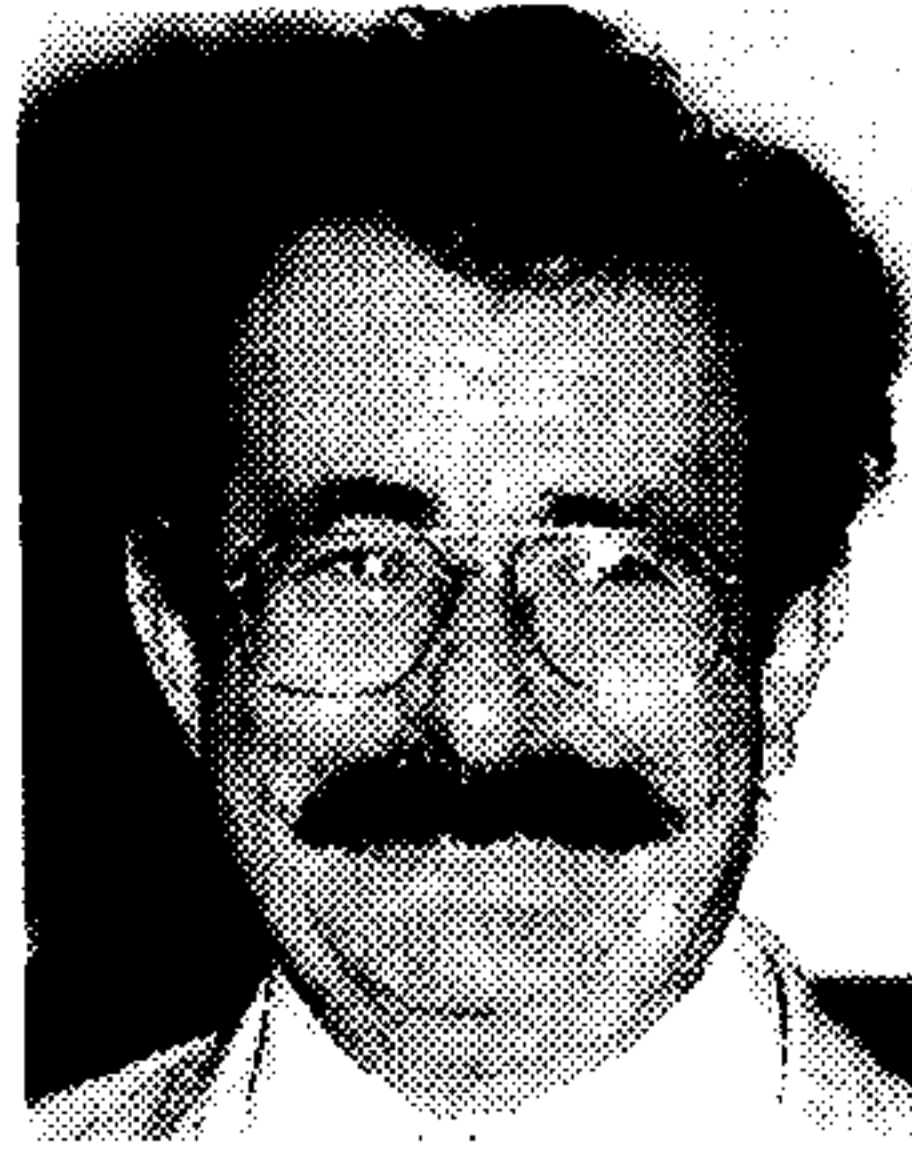
PAUL TROTMAN,

Via e-mail.

Lookalike



Winston



Frayling

Sir,

Son of Groucho moustaches, a certain smugness and spectacles — what else do our Lord Winston of the Stethoscope and Love-to-be-a-Lord Prof Frayling of the Royal College of Art and dome matters have in common?

A curious ENA B. RUSHTON,

London W1.

Crystal balls

Sir,

It was good of you to mention my talk to the Vision for London study day.

Many of the world's great parks contain buildings. Crystal Palace Park started life as a commercial theme park and took its name from the huge glass building on the site that was burned down in 1936.

Restoration of the park includes finding a popular public leisure use in a building on the site of the former Crystal Palace. National level support for that came from the passing of the Crystal Palace Act in 1990. Since then our overall vision and the development scheme have received support from English Heritage and the Royal Fine Arts Commission, as well as local community groups and businesses who value the improved economic and social prospects for this sadly rundown area.

Surely it is better for Crystal Palace to be reborn for the 21st century rather than leave this nearly derelict site to slide further into decline?

Yours faithfully,
ROBBIE STOAKES,

Director of Leisure and Community Services,
Bromley.

The angry brigade

Sir,

As one of those who helped organise a successful picket of the Russian embassy in protest at the war on Chechnya I am happy to report that Tony Benn attended the protest and spoke in opposition to the invasion.

A. Bowers is wrong to say "the Tony Benn brigade say and do nothing" regarding to Chechnya. NATO's war in the Balkans gave the Russians the green light to initiate their own war, regarding which the British government has been muted in its protests.

Yours faithfully,
FIONA PRIOR,

Socialist Workers Party.

Gail force

Sir,

As a Labour Party activist and a member of the Society of Authors and the Crime Writers' Association I would like to comment on your incredibly sexist and offensive suggestion that Gail Rebeck who is the Chief Executive of Random House which is one of Britain's largest publishing conglomerates got her CBE because she is the wife of a senior Labour Party official Philip Gould.

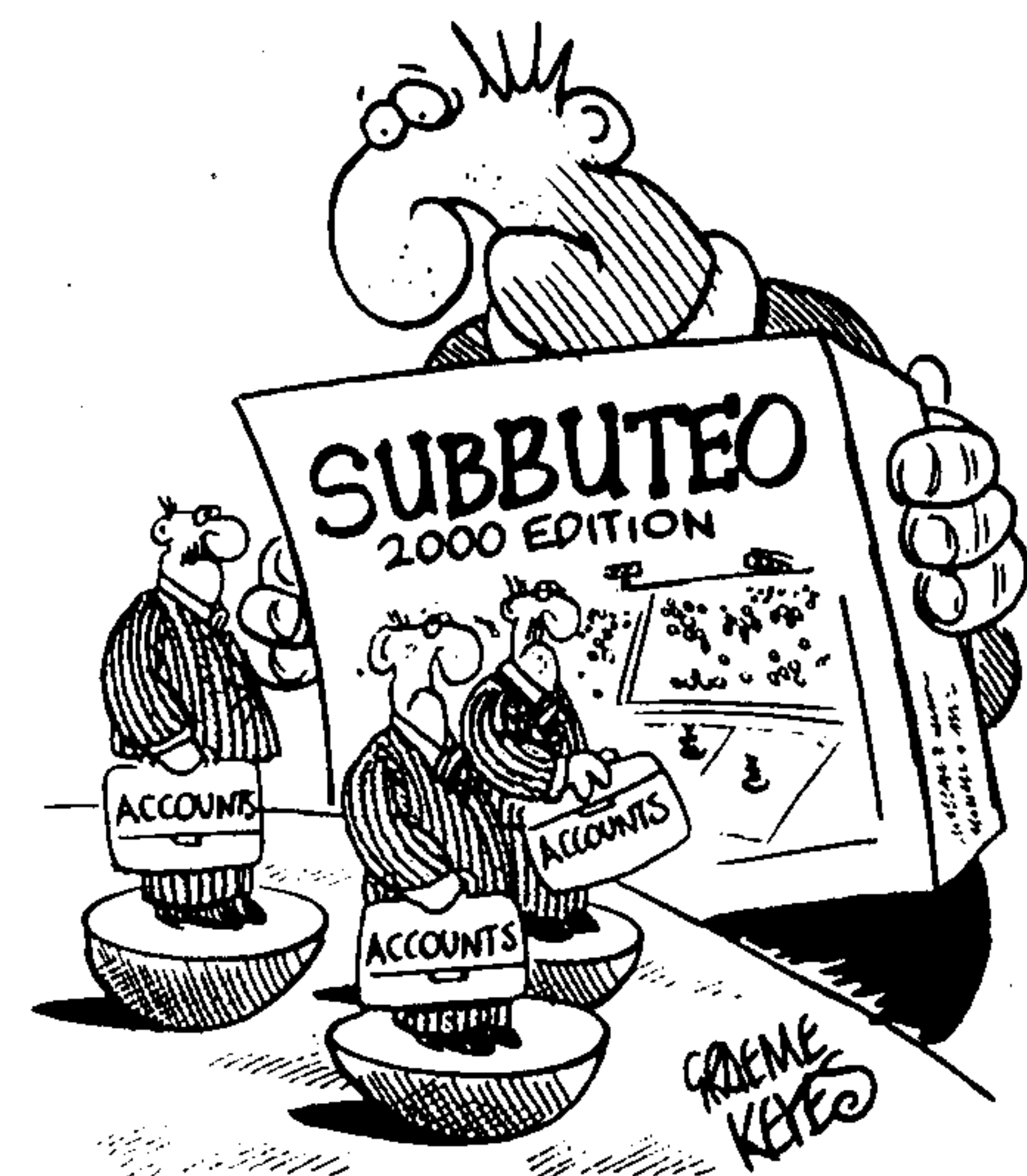
Gail Rebeck is a very capable and intelligent woman who has got to the top in a very competitive business. She has done much for Tony Blair who is unpopular in much of the literary world and she might even have got her CBE earlier but for fear that given who her husband was Tony Blair might be accused of favouritism.

For the information of you fifty something public schoolboys who run Private Eye, Philip Gould is best known in fashionable intellectual circles as Gail Rebeck's husband.

There are enough real scandals to be exposed without engaging in such malicious envy. Now please Gail will you stop rejecting my books?

Yours faithfully,
J.P. LETHBRIDGE,

Birmingham.



Byker grave

Sir,

I do hope your organ is not being manipulated by an unseen hand with an interest in developing the Byker City Farm site in Newcastle, "visited (I would add enjoyed) by thousands of inner-city kids every year". (Rotten Boroughs, last Eye).

A polytechnic student's finding of seven-times-legal-for-housing levels of lead in the soil needs to be offset against the fact that no housing exists there, nor indeed nearby. And a Health and Safety Executive conclusion that vegetables grown there are unfit for human consumption would seem to have been adequately addressed by the farm trust's decision that, er, no humans should consume them. Children who visit Byker City Farm do so for periods of less than a day at a time. They do not live there (nor, assumedly, eat the vegetables — now at least).

But the farm is in an area earmarked for development as part of Newcastle's much-hyped Quayside development, which is sad, as the tiny Ouseburn Valley is very much a haven of tranquillity relatively near the city centre. By all means send Piloti to check.

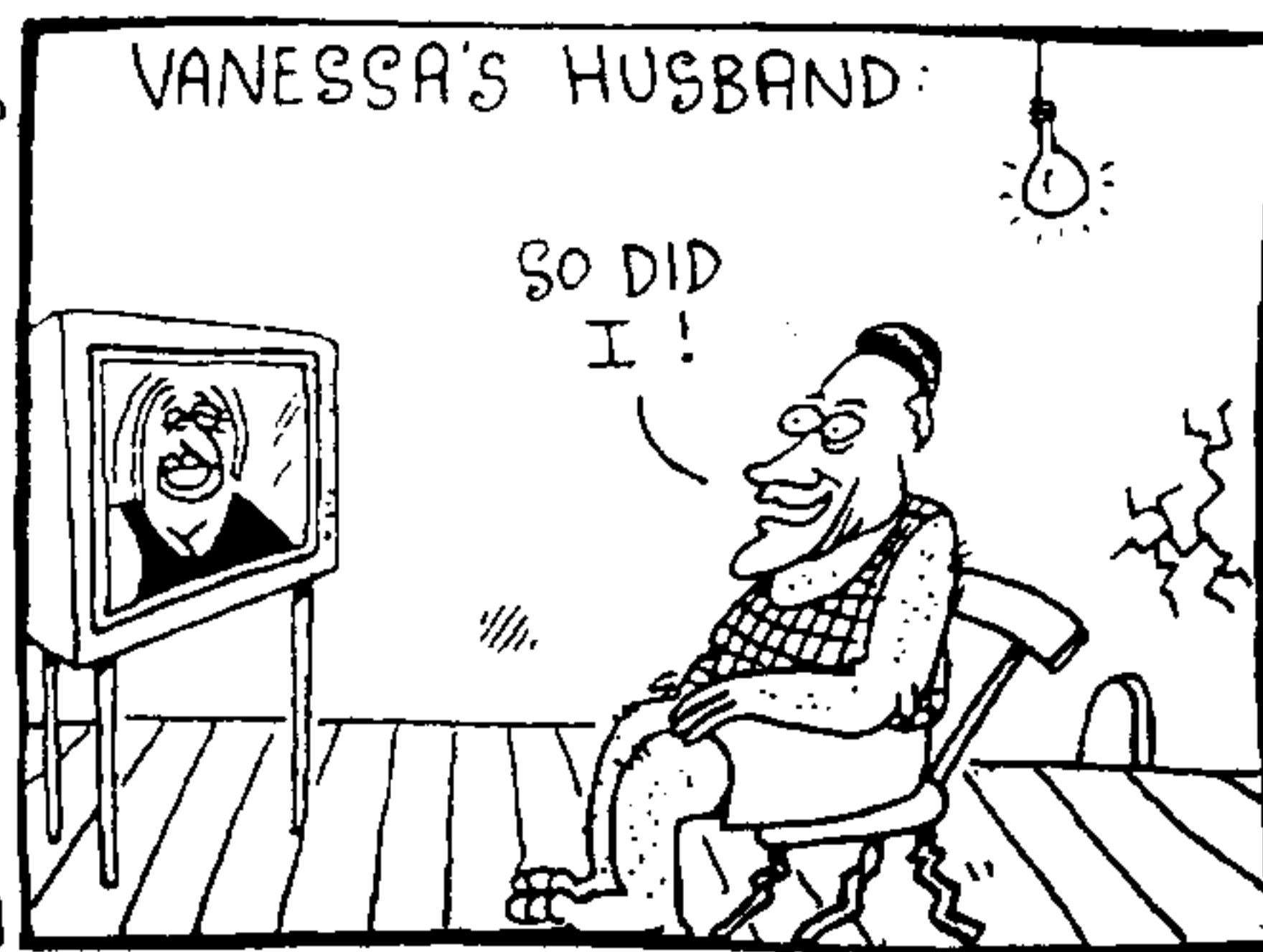
Sadly I haven't had the chance to visit it since the birth of my daughter, who will visit Byker City Farm one day if she's extremely lucky and environmental campaigners haven't by then buried under concrete and glass one of the very few places left where city children can see for themselves that milk comes from more than the fridge.

Yours,
A. GEORDIE,

Via e-mail.

SUPERMODELS

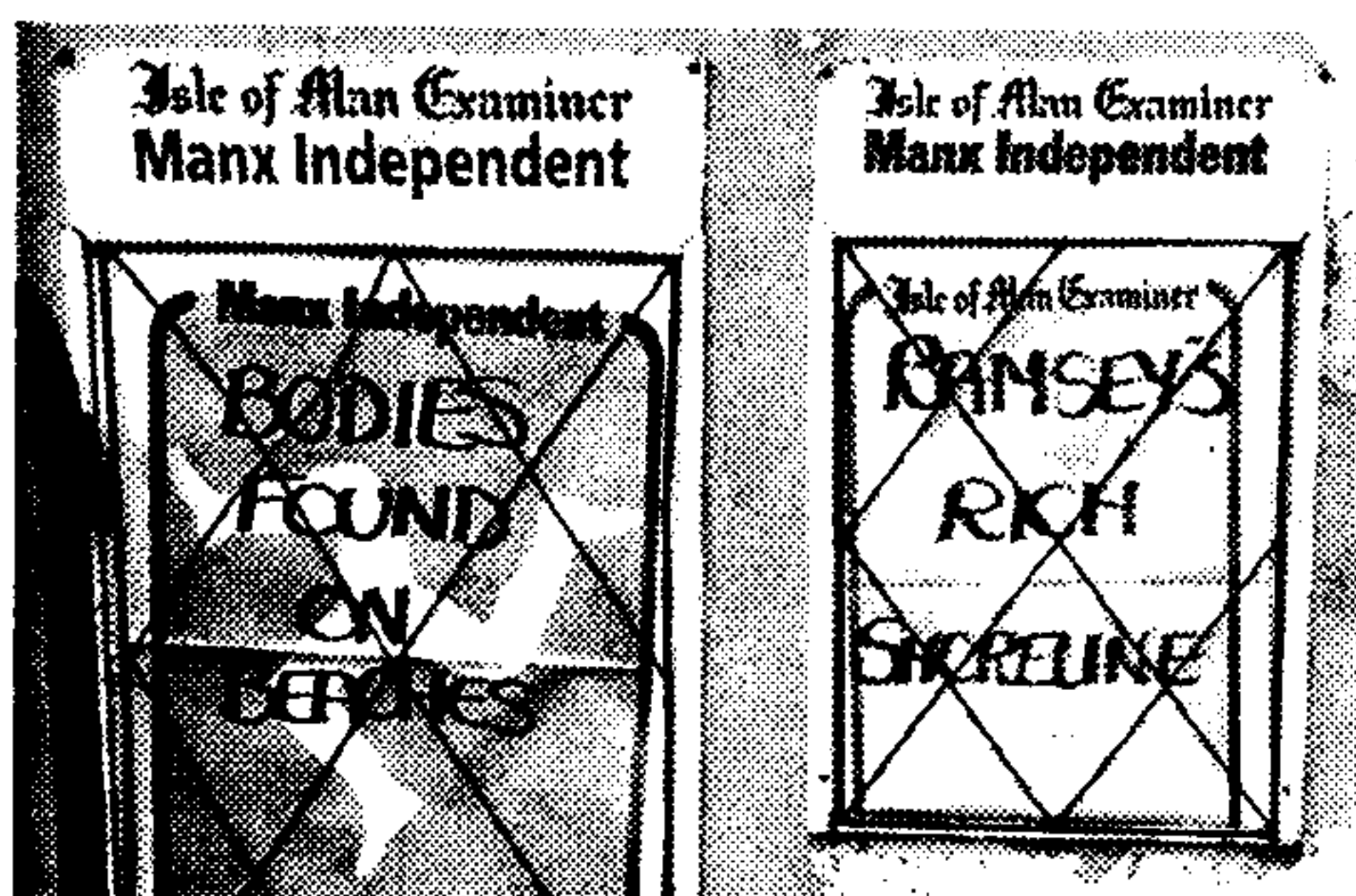
K E R B E R



Mamma Mia!
Loin King & More

All Tickets advertisement, The Times

I-SPY Isle of Man



Submitted by Jackie Becker. £10 paid for similar submissions. (SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)

Hitting the roof

Sir,

Alan Magrath and others might think that they have all the answers on flying ex:reta but not so. I live under the flight path to Heathrow and have actually been bombed. The missile hit the roof of my house, broke up 22 tiles and the lathes, shot through the loft and thence through the bedroom ceiling.

The block of ice was blue in colour, just like "Elsan" blue and both its colour and its content would be familiar to anyone who has used (or emptied) a chemical loo in a boat or a caravan.

Don't imagine BAA helped either. They took away a sample (how they must have laughed at the thought of that in my fridge) then told me that unless I knew which aircraft was responsible (they come over about every three minutes and don't have much written underneath) there was nothing they could do!

JOHN FAULKNER,

Isleworth, Middlesex.

Sir,

Re: Correspondence — Yellow Ice. On the only occasion I was ever in the presence of Stephen Hawking I remember that he remained silent until someone began to speculate about "yellow rain". Hawking made sounds and his (then) wife interpreted: "Stephen says yellow rain is caused by the excrement of bees."

I was profoundly impressed.

Yours sincerely,
BRYAN OSBORN,

Richmond.

Virtual prophets

Sir,

Dredge & Rigg (The Directors strip) are wrong indeed to imagine that the profits of cybercompanies are going down. For the most part, they haven't made a penny profit between them.

WILLIAM CAMPBELL,

Dublin, Ireland.

Blizzard of words

Sir,

Christopher Martin (Letters, 14 Jan) should learn some Inuit before blithely asserting that the language does not have many words for snow — I

unhesitatingly recommend to him Michael Fortescue's grammar of the language (Croom Helm), where among many other things he will find a whole section devoted to terms for ice and snow. Here are ten for snow for him to be getting on with: aput — snow on the ground; qaaniit — snow in the air; sullarniq — snow blown in; nittaalaqqat — hard grains of snow; qanipalaat — feathery clumps of falling snow; apirlaat — new-fallen snow; imalik — wet snow falling; putsinniq — wet snow on top of ice; manngikaajaaq — hard snow; pukak — snow crust.

GARY KING,

Via e-mail.

Lookalike



Putin



Renard

Sir,

I wonder if any of your readers have noticed the alarming resemblance between Mr Vladimir Putin, acting president of Russia, and "Renard", the Russian nuclear terrorist villain of the latest James Bond movie? Bearing in mind the recent revision of Russia's nuclear defence strategy, is there something we (and M) should be told?

Yours etc,
HADLEY,

Via e-mail.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

Garth Crooks: Why are Sheffield Wednesday at the bottom of the table?

Peter Atherton: Because we haven't won enough games.

BBC1

(Nick Hawcroft)

"As the ball gets softer it loses its hardness."

GEOFF BOYCOTT, Talk Radio

(Edward Joffe)

"I don't think you can compare like with like."

FRANK WARREN, BBC

(Sebastian Hope)

"It's a conflict of parallels."

SIR ALEX FERGUSON, BBC1

(Matthew Bain)

"The flu epidemic has now reached epidemic proportions."

Newsreader, BBC News 24

(Robert Coppinger)

Letter From Angola

from Our Own Correspondent

WITH ever greater astonishment we here at the southern tip of the dark continent look towards the land on whose empire the sun never set and marvel at your ethical foreign policy.

This month we heard how your Dear Leader, whose magnanimous, self-effacing style seems ever more like some of the livelier of our own presidents, approved the sale to Zimbabwe of spare parts for the Hawk bombers that have been in action over Congo in recent months.

The move seems to us as generous as it is peculiar. Zimbabwe is corrupt and bankrupt and wants the spares to prosecute a reckless piece of adventurism in support of a Congolese regime that is even worse. In an even more surprising turning of the other cheek, your prime minister appears to have forgotten that only last November, Zimbabwe's veteran leader Comrade Bob Mugabe, returned from a shopping trip in London, where he had been assailed by Peter Tatchell and others for his virulent homophobia, to declare that Britain was ruled by a mafia of "gay gangsters".

Equally bemusing to us here in Angola is the forthright tone of your new Africa minister, Peter Hain, who has used parliamentary privilege to name companies busting sanctions against our own rebel movement, UNITA, which is fighting a government here in Angola that shares Mr Mugabe's enthusiasm for the pointless war in Congo. But Britain's position baffles us, for we know that after nearly 40 years of violence in Angola, neither side has much claim to the moral high ground.

After a string of recent military successes, our reclusive president Jose Eduardo dos Santos appears to have the upper hand in the fighting. This follows massive weapons purchases in a country where most people struggle simply to survive.

This spending spree has been financed by a booming offshore oil sector that has also fuelled corruption within a tiny, increasingly complacent elite on a quite breathtaking scale. The streets of our once elegant capital, Luanda, are filled with mutilated ex-combatants, hobbling through the traffic to beg from vehicles negotiating potholes the size of tank traps. Traffic police, paid less than a \$1 a day, exploit the world's most complex one-way system to extract "gasosas", Portuguese for fizzy drinks and local slang for a petty bribe.

Social services have disintegrated; schools and the public health system have collapsed. The situation in the beleaguered provincial cities is even worse. The war makes farming impossible, leaving most people dependent on food aid. Morale and conditions in the army and police are so bad that soldiers frequently steal food from the displaced.

The International Monetary Fund refuses to do business here and even the US, which has so much invested in our oil, has had harsh words for our government. "High military expenditure, economic mismanagement and corruption have ensured," according to US secretary of state Madeleine Albright, "that spending on social services and development is far less than is required to pull the people of Angola out of widespread poverty."

Everyday hardships, fear of the rebels and their power-obsessed leader Jonas Savimbi, help create an atmosphere of sullen acquiescence. But Angolans also know better than to criticise. The media is tightly controlled, while the security services display a fierce efficiency unknown elsewhere in government. Dissenters find themselves alarmingly prone to fatal accidents.

A voice of protest was recently raised by your own Global Witness, an organisation that had earlier been welcomed by our leaders for its successful campaign to stifle UNITA's lucrative diamond trading that helped finance its own war effort. Global Witness's new report, *A Crude Awakening: the role of the oil and banking industries in Angola's civil war and the plunder of state assets*, has been far less well received here, provoking a rash of writs for criminal libel.

The ethics of supporting such a government, mired in the decay of our own country and now energetically helping to export misery across the region, appear as murky as the deals that underpin our multibillion dollar industry. But we can only conclude that here in Africa, for your government it is the fortunes of companies like BP and British Aerospace which count for more than our anonymous, easily forgotten suffering.

HOM SAP



AUSTIN

THIS POTION WILL MAKE YOU MORE ATTRACTIVE TO WOMEN.

DON'T DRINK IT!

YOU SQUIRT IT IN THEIR EYES.



● “John Ronald Brown is not a murderer, he is a courageous humanitarian,” defence lawyer Sheldon Sherman told the jury in a New York court. “He tried to do his best for Phillip Bondy, who was a patient in genuine need. My client acted with compassion and understanding when he agreed to help this elderly man to realise his lifelong sexual fantasy by amputating his leg. For that, he deserves our admiration, not our condemnation.”

But Prosecutor Stacy Running dismissed this line of argument as "crap. The accused is not a real doctor. He is known within the medical profession as 'Butcher Brown', and with good reason. His medical licence was revoked in 1977, and he spent three years in prison after bungling sex-change operations on seven people in California. Since then he's made a living by performing wholly unnecessary operations on fetishists, usually with disastrous consequences.

"Phillip Bondy suffered from apotemnophilia, a sexual fetish centred on the desire to amputate healthy limbs. Butcher Brown took him across the border to Tijuana, charged him \$10,000, and against all medical ethics, amputated a perfectly healthy leg. The leg was buried in the Mexican desert, but Bondy crossed the Californian border after the operation, before he died of gangrene, a few days later. That's why Butcher Brown can legally be tried here for murder."

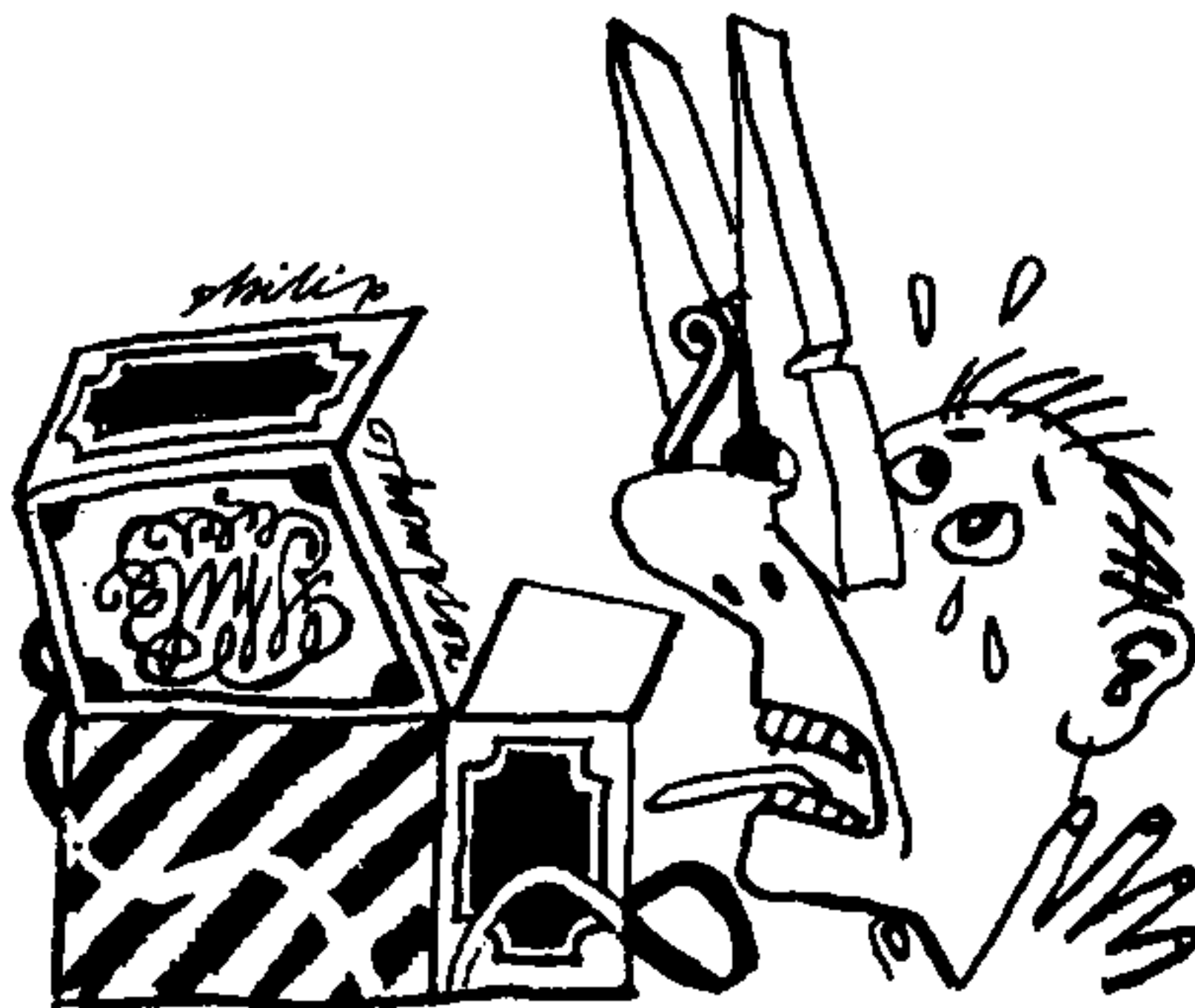
Brown was later sentenced to fifteen years in prison. (*The Australian*, 22/12/99. Spotter: Dr Nicholas Welham)

● *"This is more than going a step too far," Rebecca Nave told reporters after viewing the Nativity scene at Elizabethton High School. "This is disgusting. This is nasty. One cat was hanging from the ceiling, dressed as an angel. It had a halo. There were three dead cats dressed as the wise men, and two as Mary and Joseph, and a dead kitten in a cradle dressed as baby Jesus. That's kind of like you're mocking the Nativity scene that all Christians offer. It's very distressing that this has happened."*

But school principal Ed Alexander defended the exhibition. "When we announced a Christmas Nativity contest in the school, the anatomy teacher encouraged her students to take part. She wanted them to work as a team in a spirit of holiday activity, and we fully support her actions. We always have a plentiful supply of cat cadavers in the school, which we buy from a specialist company and use for dissection, so it seemed sensible for the students to work with them. It's true that we removed the Nativity scene from display after a week, but that wasn't because of the complaints. It was simply because it began to smell bad, and people were starting to vomit. If some people think it was offensive, then it was offensive, I suppose, but most reactions to the cat cadaver display were positive." (The Oak Ridger [Tennessee], 21/12/99. Spotter: Gerry Northam)

● “DirectDoo.com is a site dedicated to a single enterprise: to the sending of an anonymous elegant gift box full of premium dog dung to any doorstep. Yes, within a few days of your order, the recipient will receive a gift-wrapped package filled with the amount of dog waste of your taste.

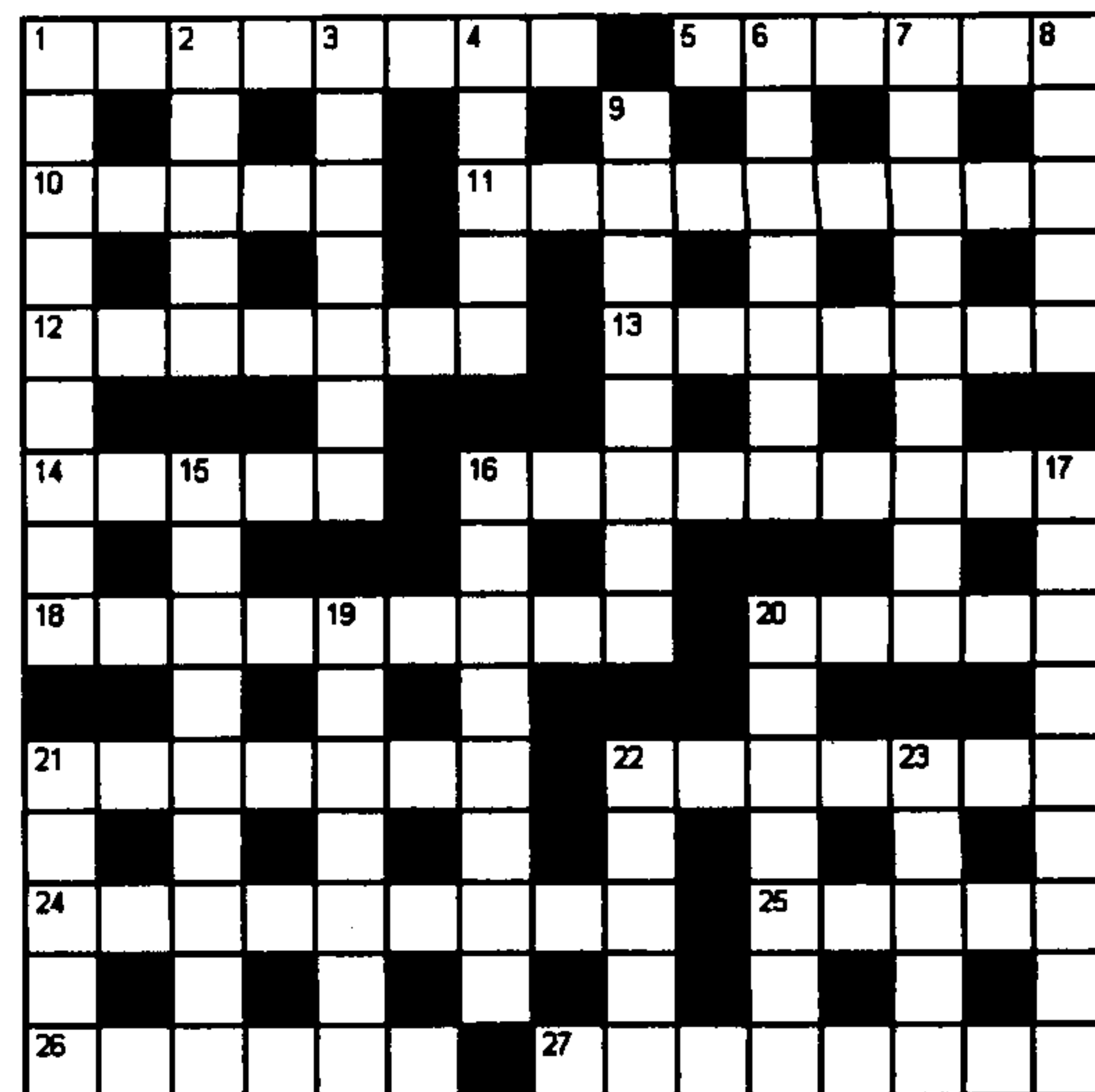
"Want to get back at your ex, boss, co-worker, or your neighbour who lets his dog



go on your front lawn? Then easily and anonymously seek perfect reprisal by sending one of our three 'Gift Boxes'. Included in the package will be your selected size of dog feces with an option to include a personal message direct from you.

"Our service is completely anonymous. The recipient will not be able to find out where the package was sent from and won't know it was from you unless you choose to disclose so in your personal message, included with the dung. Our range starts with the Quarter Pounder. For a mere \$16 (U.S.), this four-ounce heaping pile of fecal matter packs an effective punch, and is guaranteed to disgust every recipient. Half Pounders and the massive One Pounder are also available." (*The Toronto Globe and Mail*, 9/12/99. Spotter: Wallace Brown)

£100 prize



1 Our authority on poor line management takes back
route getting old singer round church (2,1,5)
5 (see 4 dn.)
10 Blanket turned back by Brenda's assistant (5)
11 Consider Brown king as a source of often impolitic
advice to the govt? (5-4)
12 No matter which chief intervenes, it would get rid of
the government (7)
13 It can give a bloke an erection, waking up (7)
14 It's a sod what bad drivers come up with (5)
16 Resting, reeling — two, four — KO! (3,2,4)
18 Put a lot of money on decrepit soak — one-time right-
wing politician (9)
20 It's symbolic of drink to half those people (5)
21 Flavour of leading position going to Dicky
Attenborough's head (7)
22 Acts like many a cabinet minister and sticks up two
fingers again? (7)
24 Novice on date let into the secrets (9)
25 Gather it's a petition Thatcher started (5)
26 Goes to wobble someone's butt (6)
27 David's spicy mate is an old queen (8)

- 1 Fiercely competitive boxer possibly to take bite out of another boxer (3-3-3)
- 2 A model – “Quite marvellous” – goes arse-over-tip getting award (5)
- 3 Rich to get ruined without a bean (7)
- 4/5 Lousy and spunky colonel, we hear (5-6)
- 6 Dirty old man not enamoured of a share in the profits (4-3)
- 7 Ecstasy: not Prescott’s thing any more! (9)
- 8 Bond, on line, gets Hick (5)
- 9 (see 19)
- 15 Silent lover into navel mutilation (9)
- 16 Throws a line better than e.g. Aitken, Archer and Hamilton as far as Tory party is concerned? (8)
- 17 It shows the different positions of Mars at a UK inclination (4,5)
- 19/9 Like accident-prone Gerald Ford, being pedestrian by misfortune? (7,8)
- 20 Piss-artist Chuck has head up (7)
- 21 Some love insatiably — they’re all over your body (5)
- 22 Girl in IRA smashed bones (5)
- 23 Mellowed feminist, some agree, rancorously (5)

**£100 prize to first solution opened on 04.02.00.
Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street,
London W1V 5RG.**

Winner: JOHN WHEELER

ACROSS: 1 Bush-telegraph 8 Flares 9 Illinois
10 Chats 11 Cupids bow 13 Premiere 15 Oracle
16 Angler 18 Faking it 20 Born-again 21 Obese
24 Restrain 25 Archer 26 Duchess of York.

**DOWN: 1 Belch 2 Scrotum 3 Toss 4 Leisure
5 Goldilocks 6 Amnesia 7 Hoi polloi 12 Retrograde
14 Run to seed 17 Lunatic 18 Friends 19 Nabucco
22 Sleek 23 Naff.**

BIRT'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY THAT TRILOGY IN FULL

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The sensational story of the inter-departmental reorganisation that took the BBC infrastructure into the management vortex.

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The amazing never-before-told story of how Lord Birt's revolutionary introduction of mould-breaking accounting procedures sent shock waves through every strata of the BBC Directorate.

VOLUME THREE

The Digital Challenge

The extraordinary saga of one man's mission to embrace the new international standard of milli-pixel-per-nanosecond On-line Digital Reception.

Offers invited in the region of 3 or 4 pence for this Epoch-Making Series (shortly to be turned into a 100-part television drama and shown on BBC Choice at 3 o'clock in the morning).

All desperate publishers should apply at once to London's leading literary agent: Curtis Bore, W1.



SALLY JOCKSTRAP

remembers E.W. Swanton

THE WORLD will never be the same with the death of E.W. Swanton, universally known as "Tom". Showjumping will never forget this much-loved figure who has covered every major golf tournament from the Monaco Grand Prix 1921 to Euro 2000 in 1997. I was privileged to

meet him only once and he said to me, "Sally, dear, are you sure that W.G. Grace scored the winning goal against Peru in 1970?"

He had a wonderful sense of humour which will be much missed in the changing rooms of Twickenham.



What do you say to your critics who call you the greatest Prime Minister ever?

Well, that's a tough one, Sir David

GRAND ARCHER BUBBLE COMPETITION

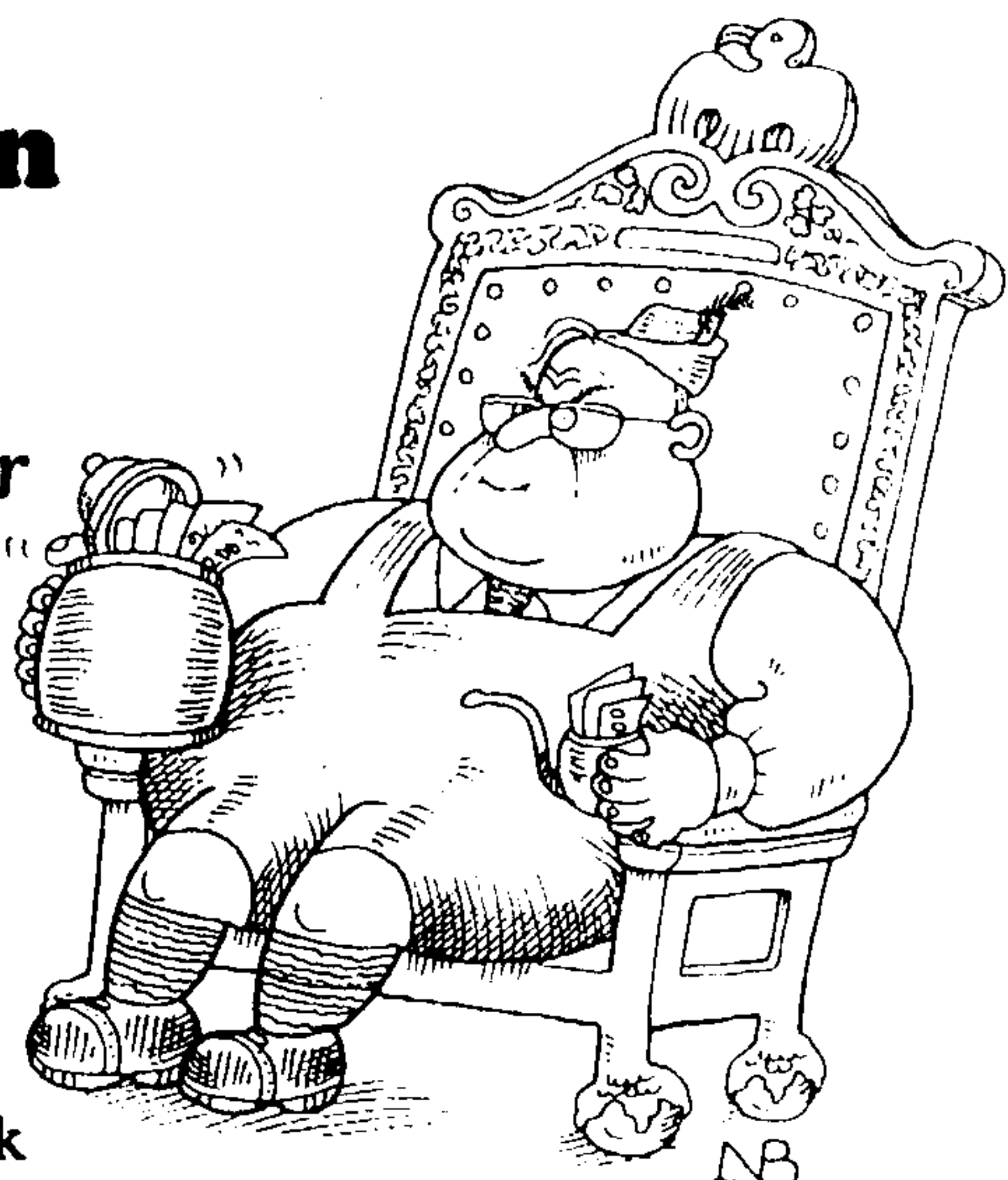
The winner of the coveted Archer Lavatory Seat is **Martin Pratt**: **Jeffrey**: I can't be Mayor now, Mary.

Mary: I'll send the cat back.

Congratulations! The seat is on its way, and thanks to all the other entries.

The runner-up, **Andrew Nickolds**, was disqualified for being a professional comedy writer — **Jeffrey**: And that's the truth, Mary, as sure as I'm standing here.

European Nursery Rhymes (From Mother Goosestep)



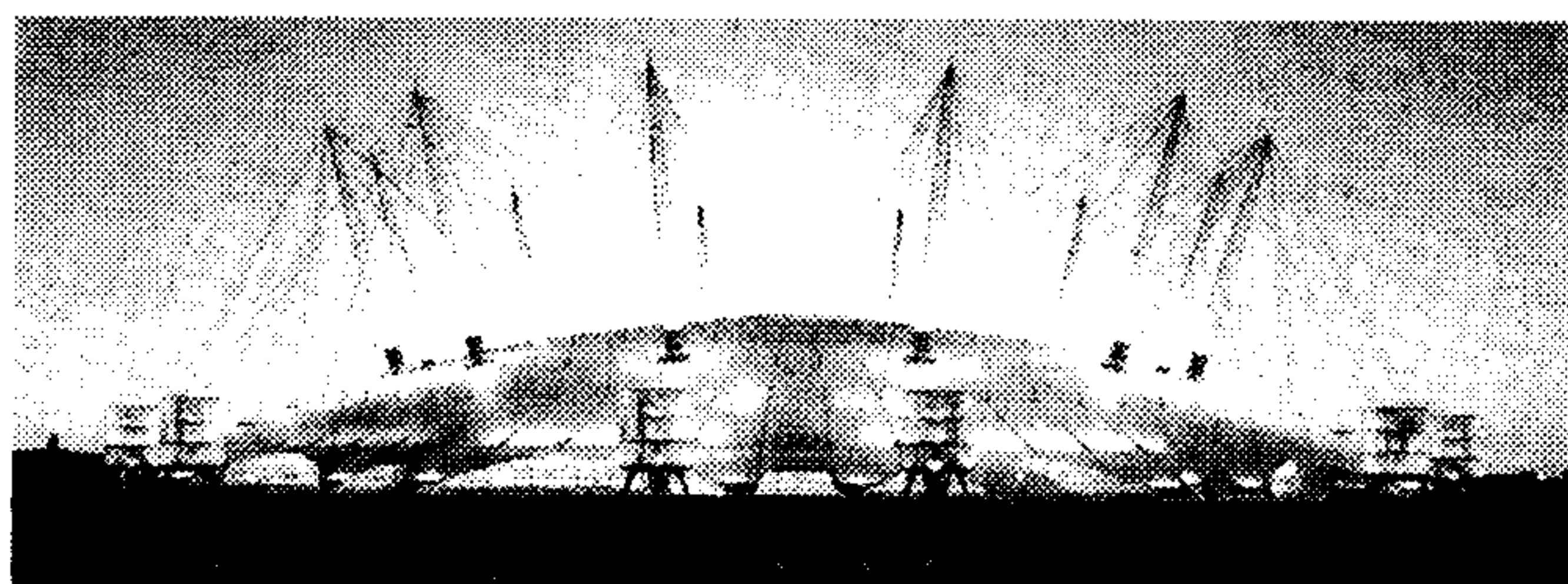
Old King Kohl

Was a Jerry old crook
And a Jerry old crook was he,
He called for his bribe,
And he called for his bung,
And he called for his fiddlers three hundred.

(Traditional)

ADVERTISEMENT

(As revised following complaints by the Advertising Standards Authority)



One amazing day (we'll make it pay)

Millions of tickets still available at Lottery outlets, Tesco branches and all good dustbins.

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"A truly incredible spectacle" Mrs Esmerelda Campbell (Housewife)

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The Big Mac Issue, in-house magazine of the McDonald's Corporation



TODAY'S ATTRACTION

Neasden schoolchildren re-enact *The History of Neasden* in song and dance. Special Parents' Offer: One-Day Ticket £2,000.

E.W. Swanton Remembers W.F. Deedes

W.F. DEEDES was universally known as plain Sir Lord Deedes by everyone in the great game

of politics. He covered every great match from the Battle of Agincourt to the Bombing of Dresden.

I will remember lunch at the Garrick in 1932 when "Bill" ordered the Brown Windsor Soup and the Spotted Dick, whereas I (cont'd. p. 94)

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)



1000 Days Of Tony!

Tony doesn't like any fuss about all his achievements, but he has allowed us to include this new portrait of him by local artist Mr Kent. And doesn't he look perfect? Humble enough to know that even though he has done a fantastic job to date, there is still more brilliant work for him to do. A.C.

Hullo!

And first this week, can I clear up a misunderstanding of what I said in my sermon at the early service last Sunday?

Some of you seemed to think that I had made a firm promise that all our collection money was going to be given to the St Albion's Cottage Hospital, to cope with the 'flu epidemic.

Look. I've got my notes in front of me as I write, and what I said was "It would be nice if we were to give all our money to help the sick."

And that's a very different thing, isn't it?

Of course, we'd all LIKE to give lots more money to the ministry of healing.

We'd LIKE give money to all sorts of good causes. To our old people. To our young people. To extending our church car park.

But, as it says in the Bible, "We have to live in the real world" (*The Book of Gordon*, 7.3).

That's not to say that we're not going to give lots of money to the cottage hospital. Of course we are!

We know there's a problem. It was a problem that was left to us by the previous incumbent, the Rev. Major.

I don't want to blame him, because it's too easy to blame other people for one's own failings. No one knows this better than Mr Milburn, who should have foreseen this 'flu epidemic and done something about it before it happened!

But that's all in the past. And we don't want to dwell too much on the past, do we?

So, that's why I am giving you my word that our cottage hospital will get all the money it needs to beat the 'flu.

It may not be this year. It may not be next year. But it will be sometime.

And that is what matters, in the real world that we live in!

And can I clear up one other silly misconception that is doing the rounds in the Cool Britannia Arms?

This is NOT "The worst week since the Vicar took over the parish". Just because Mr Livingstone is being silly

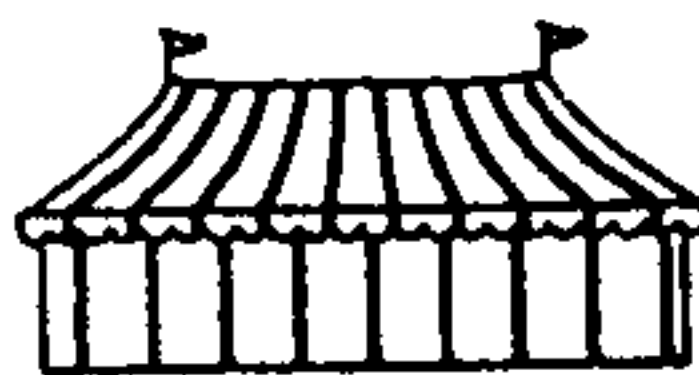
about the pantomime, Mr Straw has made a fool of himself at the Neighbourhood Watch meetings, Mr Cook has been giving arms rather than alms to our friends in Africa (an easy mistake!), Mr Brown has found that there isn't as much money in the poor box as he thought, Mr Robinson is in trouble with the tax inspectors again, Mr Alan McGee, who helps with the youth club disco, has called me some childish names and the waiting list at Mr Milburn's cottage hospital has gone up again DOES NOT MEAN that this has been a bad week!

Honestly! Whatever will the tittle-tattle brigade claim next? That no one wants to go to the Millennium Tent?!

Yours ever,

Tony

Verses From A Local Poet



Earth has not anything to show more
fair
Than the tent put up by Tony Blair
People who don't like it have got it all
wrong.
But not me! I've been right all along!

Simon Jenkins
Chair, Friends Of The Tent

MILLENNIUM TENT A HUGE SUCCESS!!!



Parishioners' Postbag

Dear Vicar,

How wrong the critics are! My family and I had a marvellous day out in the Millennium Tent last Saturday. Contrary to the reports, there were no queues at all. Indeed, we had the whole place to ourselves! Our eldest boy particularly enjoyed the Asteroid Zone where he and his sister could throw ping-pong balls at each other in a recreation of the catastrophe that wiped out the dinosaurs. Well done, everyone, especially Mrs Page and her team for organising the perfect day out! And thanks to the Vicar for having such a great idea in the first place!

Mrs Falconer,

The Old Falconry, Falcon Road.

This is just typical of the hundreds and hundreds of letters that I have written since the tent opened. Alistair Campbell (Editor)

Confession Can Be Good For You

The Vicar writes: Confession is often under-rated in the modern world. But it can be a very liberating experience, as I discovered last week when I had a visit from a very distinguished local doctor, who is also a valued member of our congregation. For obvious reasons, I must not name him, but he is known to most of us as Dr Winston of the St Vitro's Fertility Clinic. Dr Winston had something to get off his chest. "Vicar," he said, "I have sinned against you and the church. I have been talking about you behind your back. I have accused you of hypocrisy and deceit. I have taken Cherie's name in vain. Can you ever forgive me?" I found it very touching that Dr Winston had decided to come to confession entirely of his own volition, after having had a late night visit from Mr Campbell, who had told him he knew where he lived. Of course, I forgave him without reservation, although I did warn him that if he ever stepped out of line again he might find himself in the casualty department of his own hospital! T.B.



The Vicar and Cherie join with parishioners in a celebration of Tony's first 1000 Days. "We're not going to sing our own praises" says Tony as he enjoys the specially-composed "Blairennium" hymn! "Alleluia!"

KEN-THE FACE OF EVIL IS REVEALED

By Our Political Staff
A. CAMPBELL and G. BROWN

TO MANY Londoners, Ken Livingstone seems to be a jokey, harmless figure of fun, entirely suitable to become the capital's first mayor.

But yesterday, in an unguarded interview in the revolutionary Marxist magazine *News and Newtmen*, Ken's carefully cultivated mask of moderation slipped - to reveal

the brutal face of Stalinist terror that lurks beneath.

Newt Labour - Newt Danger

One of the shrewdest observers of London's political scene, Frank "Dobbo" Dobson, last night summed up the feelings of the entire capital: "This is the end for Ken. He's totally blown it. He will get no votes, and I'll get them all!"



THAT SHOCK INTERVIEW IN FULL

The Words Ken Wanted
No One To Read

By Phil Face

Phil: So, Ken, what did you think of those demos against the World Trade Organisation? Brilliant, eh?

Ken: Oh, they were nothing to the ones we used to have in the early 80s. Those were the days. "Maggie! Maggie! Maggie! Out! Out! Out!" Remember that one?

Phil: You've lost me there, Ken! Anyway, thanks for talking to me.

'IT'LL TAKE SIX YEARS' Claims Blair

THE PRIME Minister urged the British people to be patient, insisting it would take six years for his Government to fully back-track on the promise to bring NHS spending up to the level of France and Germany.

"In the last few days," he said, "we've already scaled what I said down from a pledge to a mere aspiration, but I recognise there's still a lot of work to be done."

However, the Prime Minister expressed confidence that the hundreds of extra spin-Doctors he'd taken on to deal with the crisis would soon reduce the numbers of people queuing up to criticise him.

(Reuters)

A Doctor writes



AS A doctor, I am often asked "Could you please look at this poor old Chilean gentleman and come to the conclusion that he is too senile to stand trial?"

The simple answer is "Of course, Mr Straw. May I have a cheque please?"

If you are worried about a tricky political situation, you should consult professional medical advice at once.

© A Doctor MM

HEATH'S PRIVATE VIEW



Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?

MAN WINS RECORD PAYOUT ON TV QUIZ SHOW

by Our BBC Staff
Sir Raymond Snoddy CBE

A WEST London man yesterday scooped the £6 million jackpot in the BBC's popular game show *Who Wants To Be A Director-General?*

These are the seven questions which made Mr Greg Dyke, 57, the richest man in TV history:

1. Would you like to be Director-General?

Yes/No/Don't Know/Maybe.

Correct Answer: Yes.

2. Which popular TV character is called Roland?

Roland Morse/Roland Rat/Two Fat Rolands/Joanna Lumley.

Correct Answer: Roland Rat.

3. Do you renounce Birt and all his works?

Congregation: I do.

4. Do you have any shares in Granada Television, the BBC's main competitor?

Yes/No/Maybe/You'll Have To Talk To My Solicitor.
Correct Answer: Pass.

At this point the questions became more difficult, and a plainly nervous Mr Dyke began sweating visibly in front of 15 million licence-payers.

5. Do you think you should be allowed to hold onto these shares?

After a long pause, during which he turned bright red and fingered his non-existent beard, Mr Dyke asked "Can I phone a friend?"

He then rang Sir Christopher Bland, his old colleague at London Weekend Television, who now has a new job as Chairman of the BBC.

"Hullo, Chris. I don't have to sell these shares, do I?"

Sir Christopher replied, "Not if no one knows about them. No, definitely not."

But then came the even more testing sixth question:

6. If the public find out about your shares after you've been appointed, do you think you will look:

Shifty/Dodgy/Greedy/A Figure Of Moral Probity?

At this point, Mr Dyke turned to the audience and asked them for their opinion.

They all shouted "Dodgy", which was the correct answer.

Mr Dyke then faced the seventh and final question:

7. Now that you've been caught out, do you propose to sell your shares immediately?

Yes/No/It's All Very Complicated/You're Only Asking This Because The Murdoch Media Are Running A Vendetta Against Me.

Correct Answer: Bring back Lord Reith.



Tape transcript of job interview for post of Head of British Library

Interviewer: Thank you for coming to the interview, Mr Boyle – now that you're leaving Radio 4 what experience do you think you can bring to the British Library?

Boyle: Well, I thought I'd start by moving everything around really. The reference section has been where it is for far too long, I'm not sure I like the positioning of the fiction and my first priority will be to

revamp the entire shelving arrangements.

Interviewer: What about the old books?

Boyle: I'll axe them all, obviously, replace them with unpopular new books, and then return all the original books to the shelves with slightly different coloured jackets.

Interviewer: Congratulations, you've got the job, starting Monday.

Boyle: I can't, I've axed Monday and moved it to Tuesday.

The rest of the tape can be heard on Long Wave only.



Deirdre Spart, Co-Chair of the Hackney Anti-Foxhunting and Pro-Trousers in the Workplace Alliance

FRANKLY, it is utterly sickening that the Fascist Jack

Straw has allowed the notorious rapist and woman-hater Mike Tyson to freely enter Britain instead of being deported as he deserves, er, it is quite obvious that the only reason that the hypocrite Straw let him in was because Tyson is, black, er, and as such was rightly given political asylum in Britain while the racists of the Daily Mail attempted to whip anti-black hysteria by calling for him to be deported merely because he had raped a woman in America, er
(cont'd. p. 94)

BBC-2

The Bottom Of The Barrel

Enthralling documentary about the making of a film about the affair in wartime London which Graham Greene

turned into a book that everyone has forgotten. Extraordinary mix of contemporary out-of-focus Box Brownie archive snaps showing the novelist outside a South London pub in 1943 and long interviews with people who don't have anything very interesting to say.

Eye Rating: The End

HUSBAND



Advertisement

Police Officers

A vacancy has arisen for 5000 new police officers to work in the new Police Service of Northern Ireland. The PSNI is an equal opportunity employer and applications are particularly invited from members of the Republican military community, with knowledge of firearms, explosives and local policing. Prison experience is desirable.

Apply immediately to Mr Peter Mandelson,
Chief Executive of the PSNIRA,
Adams House, Belfast.

THOSE NEW HARRODS CRESTS

What you will see



By Appointment
Suppliers of Brown Envelopes
to Her Majesty's Ministers



By Appointment
Purveyors of Lies and Mendacious
Material to the Media



By Appointment
Purloiners of Fine Gemstones from
the Late Sir Tiny Rowland



By Appointment
Conveyors of Unsold Magazine
Detritus to the Kingston-on-Thames
Incinerator Co.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN SMOKED JOINT 30 YEARS AGO

by Our Entire Staff
Lynda Lee-Potsmoker
and Splifford Longley

A MIDDLE-AGED woman yesterday admitted that she had once smoked a cannabis cigarette, but had not enjoyed it very much.

ON OTHER PAGES

Fat woman who used to be on the television in the mornings becomes less fat 2

Pictures of fat woman 3,4,5,6,9,12

Thousands die in Spice Island Massacre 24

Millions of seabirds drown in oil spill 26

Asteroid about to hit Earth 36

Grozny Burns 44

England win Test Match 49

NEW GOVERNMENT DRUG CAMPAIGN



ROY of the RACISTS

IT'S INJURY TIME AND LEEDS CHESTER UNITED'S YOUNG STRIKERS LAUNCH A LAST MINUTE ATTACK...



THAT WAKEHAM HOUSE OF LORDS PLAN

1. Number of peers to be dramatically reduced to 550.
2. Elected peers to be phased in over the next 1000 years.
3. Women peers to constitute not less than 30% and not more than 100% of assembly.
4. Not all peers to be members of House of Lords.
5. Bishops to remain in chamber provided they agree with abolition of Clause 28.
6. Law Lords to remain in chamber provided they have heard of The Beatles.
7. Gay peers to constitute not less than 78% Riboflavin (Vitamin E).
8. Report by Lord Wakeham to be so incomprehensible that Government can shelve it and continue to appoint whoever it chooses.
9. Er...
10. That's it.

© Lord Wakeham-up-it's-time-to-go-home

The Guardian January 19th 1927

Is Ali J Racist?

by Conrad White

WHILST the antics of the entertainer Ali J (real name Al Jolson) are undoubtedly amusing there must remain concern that this portrayal of black culture by a white performer to some degree is patronising and offensive.

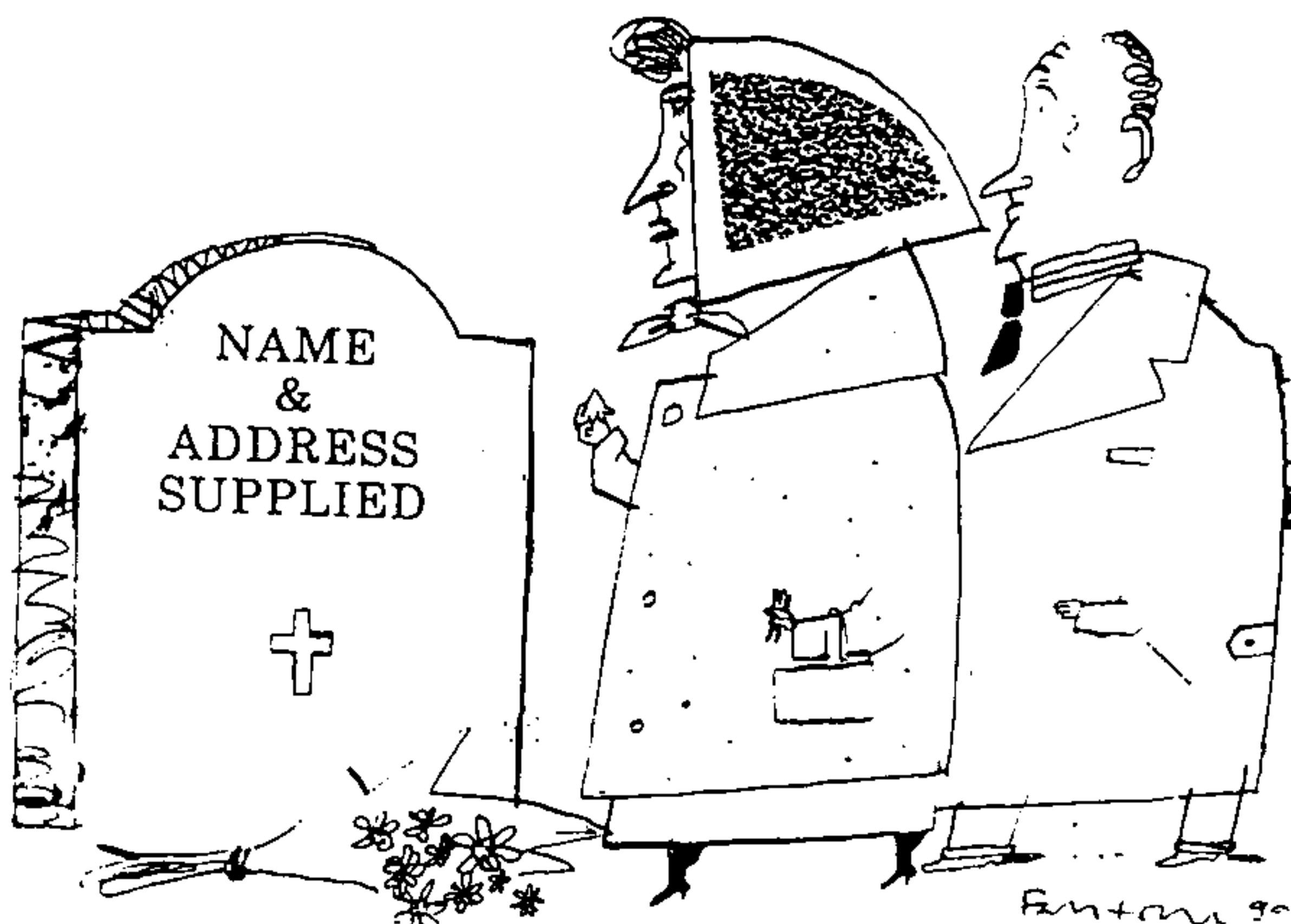
Critics of Ali J say that his adoption of the prevailing black vernacular, including catch-phrases such as "Mammee" and "Doo-Dah Doo-Dah-Day" is merely poking fun at an ethnic minority.

But Ali J's creator, the legendary Hollywood producer Toppo Thompson, says that "Ali J is mocking the type of white person



who blacks up, plays the banjo and sings songs".

Al Jolson is 112.



"He was a great one for writing to newspapers"

THE HUMAN BODY

Episode 94 THE SPINE

(Jolly music as Doctor with amusing moustache appears)

Professor Lord Winston (for it is he): Now there is nothing more vital to the human being than the backbone.

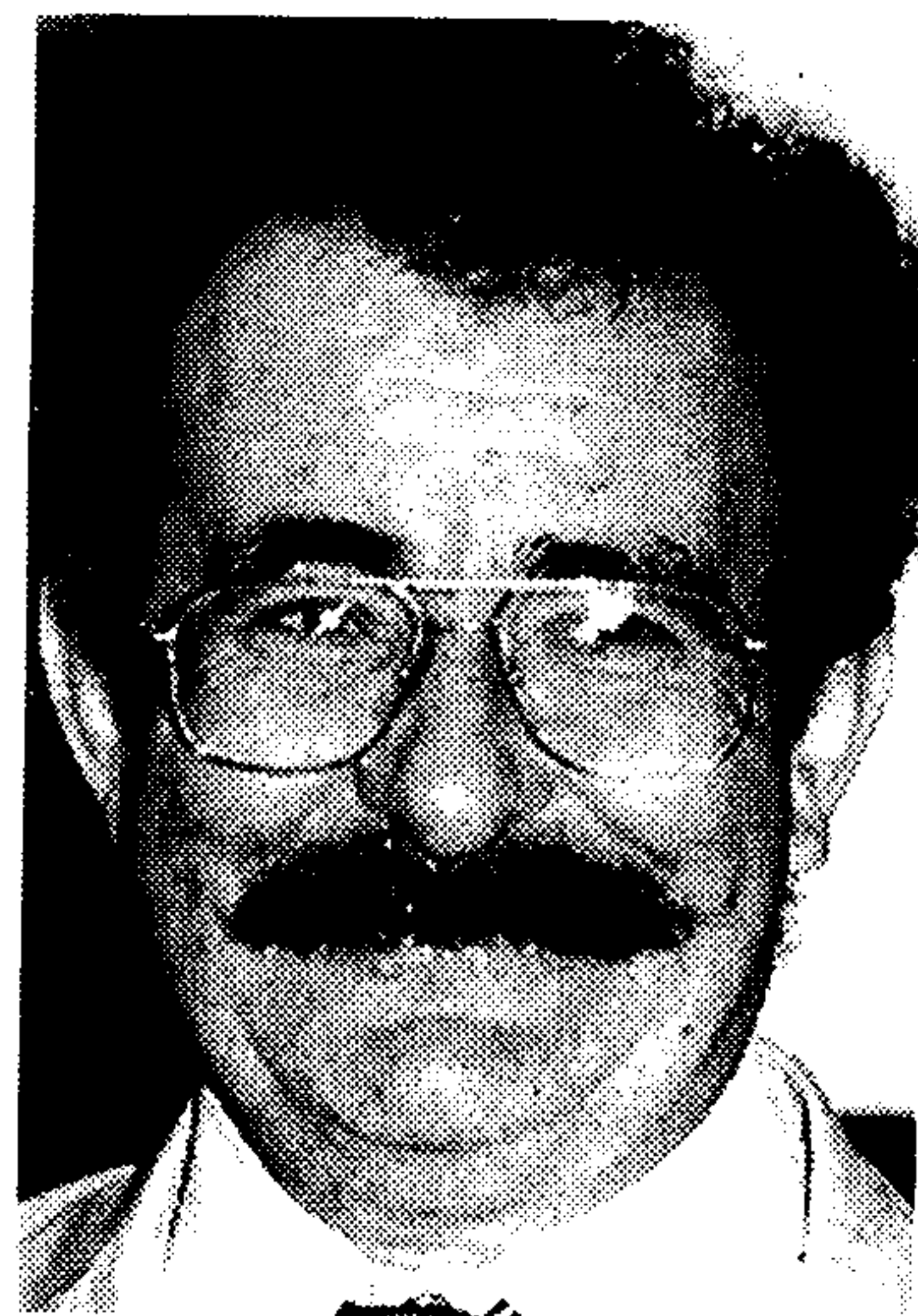
(Winston walks into X-Ray machine)

Take a look at mine. See, I haven't got one. Which leads to real problems. For instance, I have great difficulty standing up.

(Winston walks into Alastair Campbell and collapses onto floor like lump of jelly)

Without any backbone I've lost my nerve. And this affects other parts of the body as well. Like my mouth.

(Giant close-up of Winston's mouth)



I say things about the health service and then I get a bit scared and deny them.

(Close-up of Professor Winston's bottom)

And I never said that either.

(Cut back to Winston lying on floor)

Next week I'll be looking at the arm and how easily it can be twisted. Aaargh!

(Man with moustache is given kicking by computer-generated hologram of the Prime Minister. More jolly music)

Ends

POLLY FILLER



ON THE FLU

be admitted to hospital as soon as possible.

To make matters worse, the new male au-pair Milos has gone back to Slovakia claiming that he was too ill to work ("flu" again!) and that he stood a better chance of treatment in Bratislava. Thanks a lot, Milos, and if you're reading this, you're fired.

Who said male nannies were much better than women? (You in your last column. Ed.)

SO, HERE I am trying to nurse the toddler Charlie, who has adopted male behavioural patterns early and is lying on his bed coughing and whingeing about so-called "flu"! And how much sympathy do I get? None whatsoever.

I've got to juggle all this childcare with writing a column, going to the gym and having lunch with a fashion PR.

And do my parents help?

I rang home yesterday demanding a bit of emergency relief only to find my mother droning on about my father getting flu and having an air ambulance whisking him off to Manchester in the middle of the night!

Men - they are such big babies! Next week someone else will be writing this column and I'll be having a well-deserved week's "flu" in the Bahamas.

See you.

© Polly Filler

THERE's an epidemic in our household - but it's not flu, it's malingering! Or male-lingering as I call it! Because there's no such thing as flu, just men with colds and a pathetically low pain threshold! Take Simon (you're welcome to him sister!). The first sign of a temperature above 104 and he's lying in bed moaning and begging me to ring the doctor. And he's got wheezing and coughing to annoy me down to a fine art.

He's even pretending he's too ill to watch Kayak Racing from Winnipeg on Euro Sport. But he's fooling no one - except the gullible doctor who said he should

DIANA

'A Fitting Memorial'

by Our Royal Staff Phil Space

A SPECTACULAR "Fountain of Drivel" two miles high is to be the centrepiece of the £10 million Diana Memorial Theme Park in west London.

The new park, which is to

replace all the existing parks between Kensington Gardens and St James's Park, will consist of a continuous seven-mile walkway, connecting zones commemorating different aspects of Diana's life.

The trail will begin at Harvey Nichols and lead, via Lorenzo's Restaurant, down to the Chelsea Harbour Club, taking in on the way the barracks where James Hewitt served and the luxury apartment of her friend Dr Omar Sharif, and ending back in Knightsbridge at the department store Harrods.

QUEEN OF PARKS

The fountain itself will symbolise all the millions of words which have been spoken and written about the late Princess since she was taken from our midst towards the end of the last century.

NEWSNIGHT

20th Anniversary Special

(Paxman Interviews Paxman)

Paxman: So, Jeremy, twenty years in the same job. Time to pack it in, wouldn't you say?

Paxman: Er... well, I think we've tried...

Paxman: Oh, come off it. It's all pretty predictable, isn't it? We've all had enough of you.

Paxman: No, I think that the programme still...

Paxman: But nobody watches it. It's on too late and it's full of bores.

Paxman: No, that's unfair...

Paxman: Answer the question. Is it full of bores?

Paxman: Let me begin by...

Paxman: Is it full of bores?

(Paxman asks himself the same

question fourteen times)

Paxman: Well, since you are clearly not going to answer, why don't you just resign?

Paxman: Thank you very much, Jeremy. *(Paxman picks up newspapers and shuffles through them.)* Now, a quick look at tomorrow's papers. There's a piece here about Jeremy Paxman and Newsnight, another one here about Paxman at 50, a number of papers are carrying the Paxman story and the Sun here leads with the headline "Time To Pax It In Man"... Very amusing...

(Continued for the next 20 years)



"Congratulations, Mrs Postlethwaite. You may well have given birth to the next Dalai Lama!"

Nursery Times

Old Shoe Woman Arrested In Dawn Raid

by Our Nursery Crime Staff Polly Putthetoynebeon

AN OLD woman, 75, who lives in a shoe, yesterday became the first victim of the government's new anti-smacking campaign.

She was arrested by armed police officers who broke into her shoe early yesterday morning, following a complaint from one of her many children.

Smacks Hastings

A police spokesman said "We received a hand-written note alleging that the old woman in question had so many children that she 'didn't

know what to do'.

"However, this is no excuse for her subsequent actions — ie feeding them on broth without any bread, before whipping them soundly, and sending them to bed."

Following the old woman's arrest under S.28 of the new Abuse of Minors (Familial Situation) (Smacking) Regulations 2000, social workers removed the children to a nearby council home, where they could be properly abused by trained paedophiles.

The shoe is to be demolished.



GLENDASLAGG

The Millennium Bag (Surely "bug"? Ed.)

HATS OFF to Cherie Blair — the modern mum at Number Ten!? Not for her sitting around at home with ickle-diddums a-cooin' and a-mooiin'?!?! She's straight back to work as a bustlin' barrister makin' sure Mums and Dads take enough time off when they have kiddies?!?!

Good on yer, Ms Booth!! Leave Baby Blair with the nanny and get on with running the country!?!

CHERIE!?! Call yourself a mum??? You're a disgrace to your whole sex, deserting the little 'un no sooner than you're out of the maternity ward!!

What chance has the poor kid got, if mum thinks going after half-a-million a year is more important than giving young Tony (or Tonia!) his or her bottle of SMA!?!?!

Take your wig off, darling, and get the Pampers out!!

WELCOME back, Vanessa!! Feltz, I'm talkin' about, stupid!?!?

Vanessa Sveltz, I call her, now that she's trimmed down to a mere 18 stone!?!?!?

That'll serve her two-timin' hubby right for ditching her 'cos

she's too tubby! (Glenda's next little rhyme? Geddit!?!?!)

VANESSA FATZI!! Whod'yathink you're trying to kid, sister???

Slimline!?!? Dream on!!! You still make Dawn French look like Twiggyl?!?!?

HILLARY CLINTON!! Don'tcha just want to chuck up???

So, she's going to stand by her man for the rest of her days!!!

What a betrayal of the entire female sex, after all he's done to humiliate you, a-mopin' and a-gropin' around the White House!?!?!?

What's gotten into you, hqney??? Can't you see the man's no good!?!?! D.I.V.O.R.C.E. is the only Tammy Wynette song for you!?!?

ALAN MILBURN!!! I'll find a bed for you in my intensive care unit any day!?!?

DAVID IRVING!! M-m-m-m!! Let's rewrite some history together, big boy!?!?

CARDINAL WINNING!!! I've got no time for poofs, either, your reverence!?!?

Byeeeeeeee!!!

DIARY

Oh Jasus. Oh Jasus oh Jasus oh Jasus. Oh Jasus. Will you look at that? asks Dad I look down at me plate. Oh Jasus he asks, was there ever a child like him for the greed and gluttony, the gluttony and the greed? And now the others are all staring at me plate, and they'd take a pitchfork to me head out of jealousy if we hadn't sold the pitchfork to old Ma McGubbins to pay for the last season's hay which they needed to feed the donkey to pull the peat to buy another pitchfork to replace the one they'd sold to old Ma McGubbins.

How's he get to have two peas? says Malachy, Oh Jasus, is tis birthday? Dad snatches one of me peas and cuts it in half, snatching half for himself and placing the other half in his top pocket for safekeeping, alongside last year's moth. Malachy caught the moth in his sock and Dad said he'd keep it for our St Patrick's Day fry-up, moths cook beautiful in batter he said though their wings can prove a mite chewy, it's all that flying they do, Jasus who'd be a moth in this day and age, and aren't I nearly destroyed? Malachy says moths are Protestant, ye've never seen a moth with a rosary, now have you, he says, but Mam says they're good Catholics, and all that flutterfluttering is them making them making the sign of the cross to the good Lord, is it not.

So I'm cutting me remainin' pea into four and spreading the quarters round the plate to give an impression of quantity when there's a swoosh from the chimney and Great Grandma McCourt emerges covered in soot, her false teeth close behind. She's been out whorin' agin, whispers Alphie. Jasus, how can ye tell, I hiss back. She's suckin' on a cough-drop, says Alphie, They always pay her in cough-drops. But is it not a mortal sin, I ask, Will she not be condemning her soul to eternal damnation?

Not for a cough-drop, snaps Mam, Maybe for a sherbet lemon or two toffees, now shaddup and eat your pea or you won't be getting your mouse-tail for puddin'.

There's a row taking place between Great Grandma McCourt and me Dad. Oh Jasus, says Dad. Don't you Oh Jasus me, says Great Grandma McCourt. I'll Oh Jasus you when I want and where I want, says Dad. Oh Jasus, says Great Grandma McCourt. Don't you Oh Jasus me, says Dad. I'll Oh Jasus you when I want and where I want, says Great Grandma McCourt. Oh Jasus, says Dad.



FRANK McCOURT

But just now and at that very moment the St Vincent de Paul Society is staging its annual march-past, horns a-blowin' and hymns a-blarin' preaching love and peace to all mankind. So hearing the cursin' and sensing a mission, they divert into our kitchen, all five of them, let's call it fifty, no two hundred, so's to break up the arguin' and claim two more penitent souls for the Good Lord.

Oh Jasus, say the pair of them as the St Vincent de Pauls break into a grand old Irish hymn:

*"The leprechauns are jigging swell
'Pon this moonlit night
The bells 'pon their caps a-jingle
Their dancing shoes all white
As Cuchulain sits 'pon his throne
Lookin' grand and mighty scary
And 'pon his knee - well, bless my soul -
If it isn't the Virgin Mary."*

As the chorus flies hither like an angel in the night, Mam arrives in the room wearing the remains of last year's suet pudding while she waits for her dress to dry after the accident with the sheep dip when it sprung a leak while she was gathering the slugs below it for the Sunday stew, but the leak didn't mater, she said, because the last sheep'd run off with Paddy McGarrigey six months before after Paddy had sweet-talked her into marryin' him with the promise of a pen of her own, only the last we heard of the poor sheep was she'd taken to the bottle and was proppin' up the bar in Mulligan's every Friday night with her pint of stout and a chaser by her side sobbin' her heart out that she'd been blinded by love and Paddy'd only wanted her for her wool, bejaysus

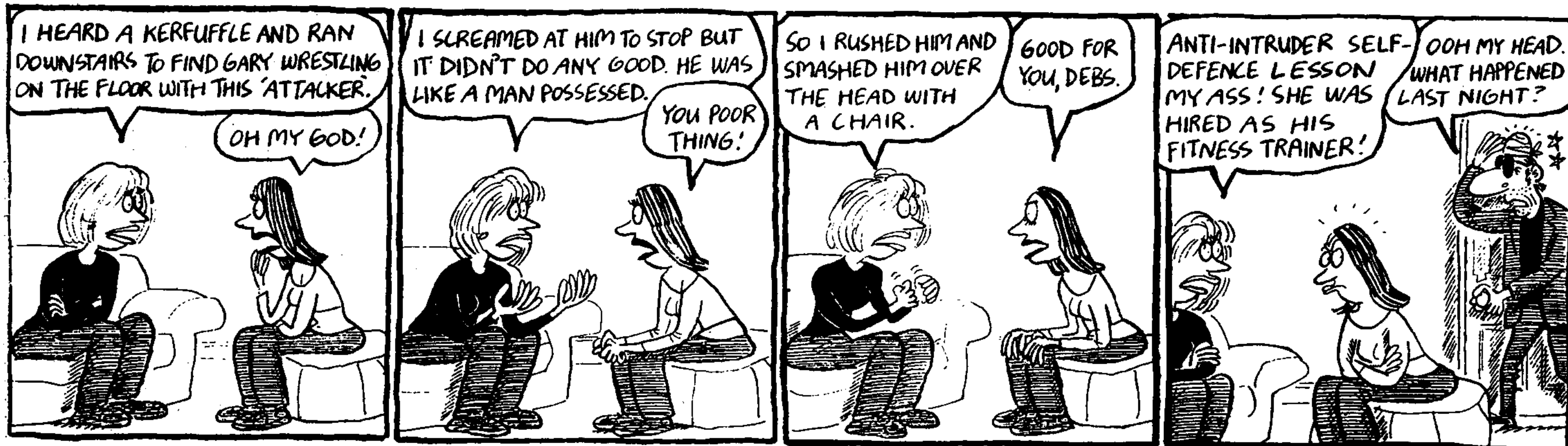
wouldn't you know the filthy scoundrel. And Mam says, what in the name o' God is goin' on in here, who're all these people tormentin' my eardrums with their carry-on and Dad says, it's the St Vincents, they're reclaimin' our Souls for the Lord, and Mam says, well I trust they've left their fleas outside and Dad says, Fleas, Fleas, what are we waitin' for, woman, take all those St Vincent fleas in hand, train 'em to sing and jig and take them to Hollywood - we could be sittin' on a goldmine, woman. So Dad rushes outside but he never manages to catch 'em. Alphie whispers he reckons a flea can spot a loser a mile off.

So now here I am in New York fifty years on and the cheques are fallin' through the door, muckin' up the carpet and fillin' up the penthouse flat with their dreadful swishin' racket and the investment adviser and the stockbroker are on the phone with their incessant news of more money which I'll somehow have to find a home for and Gregory Peck and Dustin Hoffmann and Robin Williams are sayin' they'll be droppin' round for dinner but the only caviare in the shops is Beluga when everyone knows Sevruga is the best and I'm worryin' that the pastel eggshell blue we chose for the drawing room of our country estate would be better suited to being a little stronger, a little more robust, somethin' closer to navy and sometimes when I look out at the sky and the stars and the moon over Manhattan and I see the lights shimmerin' below I think to myself that this is really no better than the moon that once shone drably over Limerick and nothin' ever seems to be goin' right, what with the follow-up to the tie-in of the book of the movie of the book not goin' well and ten million folk back in Ireland complainin' I've got a tendency to exaggerate and as I stare out at The Statue of Liberty I reflect with a tear dribblin' down my cheek that I am as solitary and cold as that dear sweet stone lady and together we don't stand a fiddler's chance in hell of findin' true comfort and joy, not now that Tiffany's say they're clean out of the diamond chandeliers and yes, the sad news keeps on drizzling like the rain from the sullen clouds, and Jasus, I think it'd destroy me if t'were not for my elfin spark and my indomitable Irish spirit.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER



Literary Review

Rhyme and punishment

IT took Ted Hughes' death to make poetry — formerly a bleak and untilled spot in the literary garden — sexy again. Sylvia. Gas ovens. Squashed fauna on the West Country highways. Suddenly, for reasons barely connected to literature, the slim volume was back in vogue.

You don't believe me? A cabinet minister took it upon himself to denounce the Oxford University Press when the accountants chewed up the poetry list last spring, and even now the gossip columns are aflame with what Blake Morrison may or may not have said in the aftermath of this year's T.S. Eliot prize.

All this fuss is a tad ironic given the minuscule dimensions of what might be called the British poetry industry, most of whose movers, shakers and fixers (more about them in a bit) could be comfortably assembled on the top deck of a London bus and still leave space for Mr Paulin to do one of his wonderful *Late Review* comic turns.

Inevitably there are significant axes and paths to preferment: the London/Oxford/Faber line, exemplified by Craig Raine's snooty new mag *Areté*, is one; the regional Bloodaxe/Carcanet/Anvil line another; the oirish strain a third (there's also the joke traditionalist line of rhyme and scansion championed by the *Literary Review*, but don't let that detain you). Occasionally the lines intersect — Paul Muldoon and Tom Paulin have a foot in both the Oxford and the Hibernian camps — but these are the main demarcations.

It's a small world, this, its feuds played out in the pages of the *TLS* and the *London Review of Books*, and other organs with even shakier circulations, its reputations boosted and sunk by a tiny collection of pundits whose relationships with each other can be amusingly detailed by anyone with access to the appropriate reference books, in which practically every path leads back to the Faber & Faber offices in Queen Square.

The reflexivity, self-interest and general self-promotion of most modern verse has to be seen to be believed. Take, for instance, Mr Tom Paulin's recent collection, *The Wind Dog*, published by Faber. The book is dedicated to his chum Seamus Heaney (published by Faber). "My Skelf" (originally written for a Hughes *festchrift*) obligingly namechecks Uncle Ted (published by Faber). There's even a poem about going to a poetry reading with Hugo Williams, who just happens to be published by... Well, I won't go on.

Interestingly the threads of influence and association stretch out even further than this. Respectfully received by messieurs and mesdames the critics — see especially a toe-

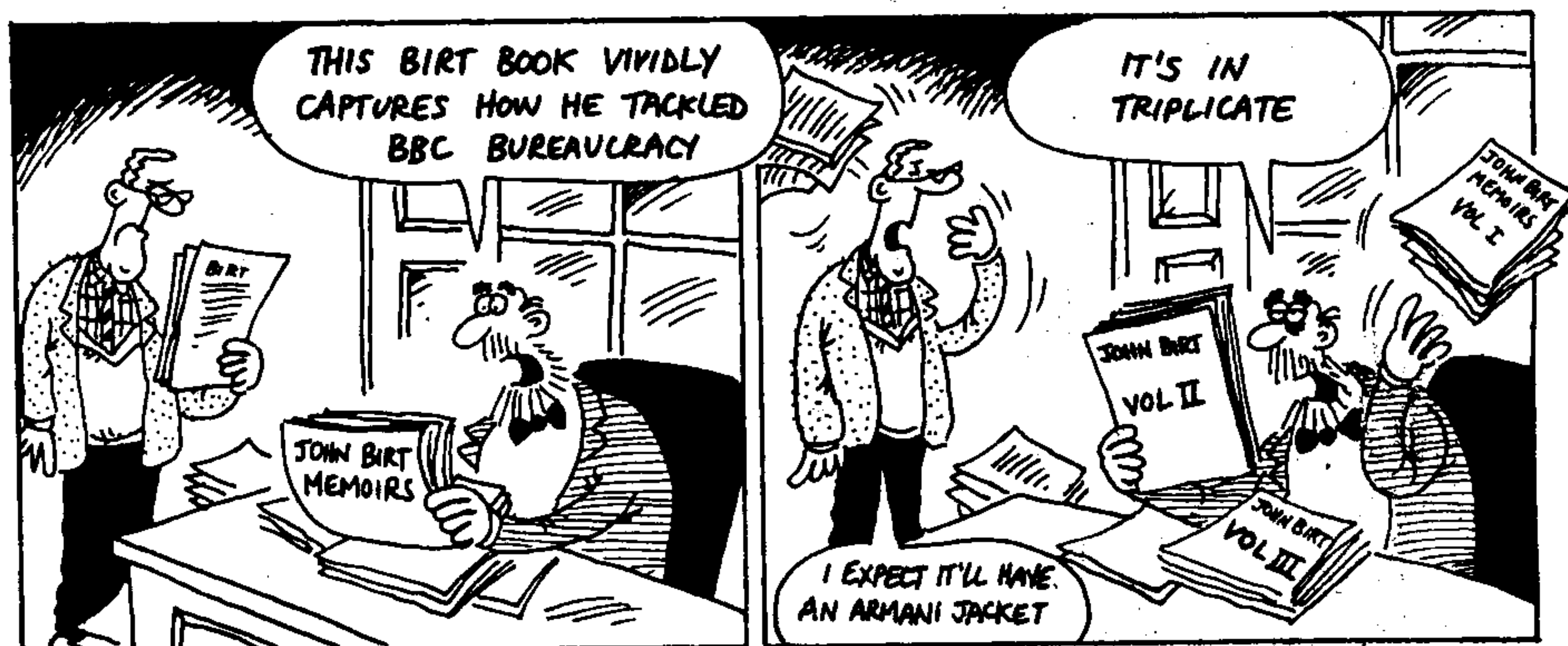
curling encomium by John Kinsella in the *Observer* — *The Wind Dog* is a Poetry Book Society choice and was shortlisted for the Eliot Prize. Among the judges for both awards is Jamie McKendrik, coincidentally "Poet in Residence" at Hertford College, Oxford, where Paulin officiates as G.M. Young Lecturer in English.

Not, of course, that I'd want you to think that it's all just one big happy family here in the world of strophe and antistrophe. The big cheeses can get seriously riled, as can be adduced by the first number of *Areté*, edited by Craig Raine (the latter is published by Faber), in which a gratuitous swipe is taken at Michael Hoffman (also published by Faber, last collection also a Poetry Book Society Choice, also shortlisted for the Eliot Prize) over his enthusiasm for the novels of James Buchan. Did Mike once give Craig a bad review?

Back-scratching (and stabbing) aside, is any of it any good? In common with most other national art forms, poetry is heavily in thrall to the magical figures from its past — notably the Eliot-snooty line and the Auden-demotic line. The polar opposites, on whose opposing sides nearly everyone eventually assembles, are Hughes and Larkin, the joke about Hughes' wildly over-praised *Birthday Letters* being that the best (early) poems show detectable Larkin traces. For all the new lad elements — Simon Armitage, Don Paterson and others — donnishness predominates. For example, Paulin loves the "after" formulation, as in "after Brecht" or "after Verlaine", and in the former manages to mention Homer, Dante, Euripides, Shakespeare and Villon in a dozen lines. As for what wins the prizes, here's a poem from Hugo Williams' Eliot-winning *Billy's Rain*:

Now that she has left the room for a moment to
powder her nose,
we watch and wait, watch and wait,
for her to bring back the purpose
into our lives.

"I could do that," I hear you say.
Yes, but the point is, buster, you're
not a poet.



WHAT YOU DIDN'T MISS Pt 94

Killing Time, Simon Armitage (Faber, £6.99)

This is the kind of poem that people like to read these days, combining street-wise references with post-modern tricks
It's the kind of thing that gets put on Channel Four with Christopher Eccleston
my name is Simon, I'm thirty-six.

This a poem about the Millennium, and by extension the whole meaning of existence,

I'm dropping in as much stuff from the Guardian news pages as I can think of
and you highbrows can keep your distance.

Meanwhile on the Thames, the people trying to hoist the BA London Eye are all shagged out,
this kind of thing is supposed to make poetry dead contemporary, but you know I have my doubts.

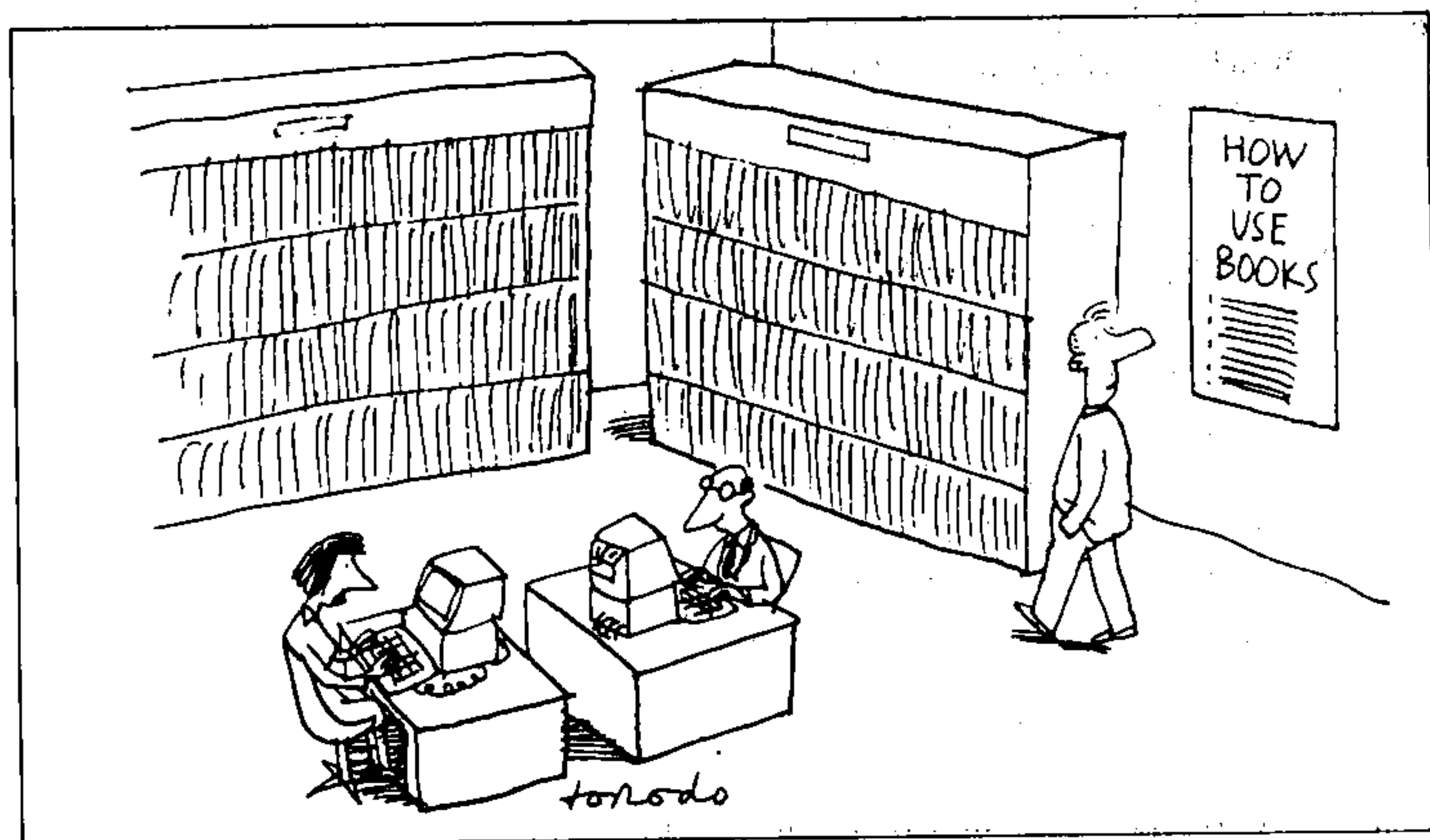
While on deck the waiters clear the muddied plates, while hoping that no one will fall in

With any luck this book will be warmly commended in next week's *Observer* by Mr Tom Paulin.

Water laps against each prow. It's the eve of the dawn, a millennium lately departed

It's no good you thinking, "That Simon, he'll stop now for sure", cos I've only just started.

And finally, in a West Yorkshire village a poet delivers himself of his burden
I've an idea I've seen this kind of stuff somewhere before in — could it be — the
Collected Works of W.H. Auden?



BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ WHEN it was acquired by Weidenfeld & Nicolson, Ann Widdecombe's fiction debut *The Clematis Tree* was commonly regarded as another example of the celebrity novel — a publisher throwing obscene amounts of money at a famous person with no obvious literary pedigree in the desperate hope that name recognition alone would flog the product. However, it now seems Widdecombe is better qualified than the cynics first expected.

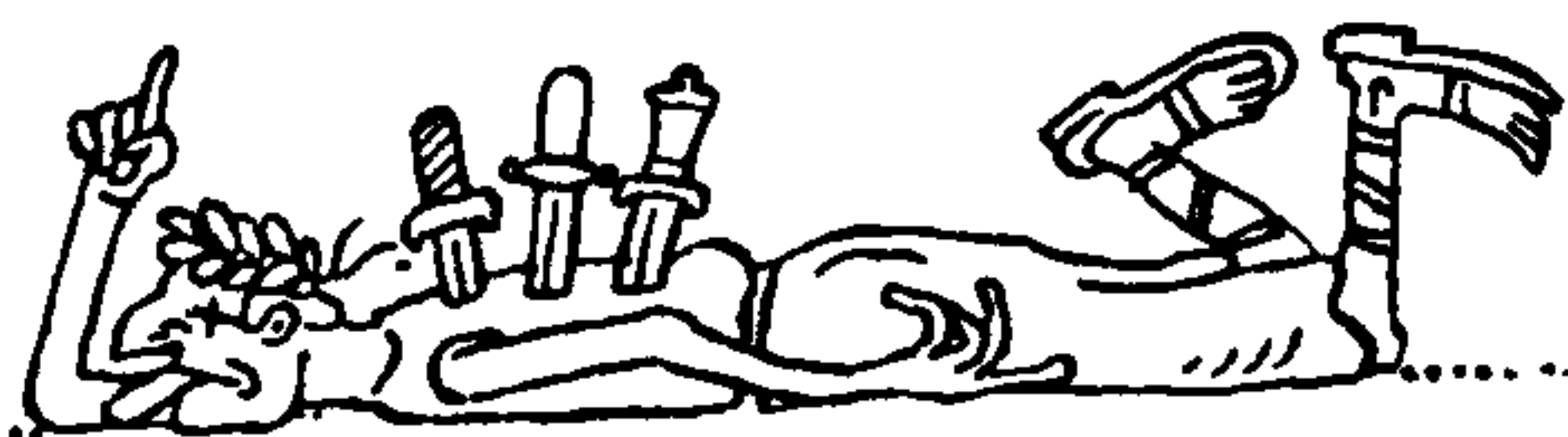
As well as outlining her political career, the three-line biography that accompanies proofs of the book adds that the shadow home secretary "has been writing since at school where she won essay prizes". With such achievements already under her belt, can the Booker be far off?

■ DAME Philippa Harrison last week announced her semi-retirement from Little Brown Jug, handing over the day-to-day control to her likeable lieutenant David Young. She added that after a short sabbatical, she will be returning three days a week to work on acquiring and editing.

Let us hope, then, that free of the distractions of being an administrator she can improve on her recent track record in acquisitions. Her big purchase at Frankfurt in 1998 was George Soros' *Crisis of Global Capitalism*, which passed into the stockrooms of the remainder shops with indecent haste. The dame followed this last year with another pet project: Badger Lamont's yawn-a-minute memoir-cum-economics textbook *In Office*, sales of which barely registered on the book trade's radar screens.

'Bookworm'

IN THE BACK



VACCINES

A RIGHT BALLS-UP

EVERY now and then a new minister comes along who does not have the answer to an awkward question and admits it.

One such is the new parliamentary secretary for health, the young MP for Pontefract Yvette Cooper, who recently married Ed Balls, Gordon Brown's economics adviser.

On 19 October last "Mrs Balls" was confronted by Norman Baker, the tenacious Liberal Democrat MP for Lewes who, ever since he read the *Eye* on the subject last year (see *Vaccine and Not Heard*, *Eye* 970) has been trying to get an answer from the government about the use of material from BSE-infected beef in widely-used vaccines.

The minister admitted: "Vaccines already licensed in 1989 may have been using UK-sourced bovine material in the manufacturing process, but by 1992 all manufacturers of existing vaccines had confirmed that they were sourcing bovine material from outside the UK."

In other words, between 1989 and 1992, when BSE-infected cattle were banned from the food chain, they were not banned from the manufacture of vaccines. Mr Baker asked a couple of supplementary questions. "How many people have been injected with such vaccines"; and "what steps have the government taken to monitor any long-term consequences"? Yvette Cooper was all a fluster. She studied her brief and muttered that the Committee on Safety of Medicines considered that the health risk from bovine material in vaccines was "remote".

Not included in her brief was the evidence to the Phillips inquiry into BSE from the four experts who first used the word "remote" in this context — that they had done so only to avoid panic in the mass vaccination programme planned in 1989, while in simultaneous warnings to the department of health they had made clear their view that the risk from using such material in vaccines was not remote at all (see *Eye* 982).

The important information Mr Baker wanted Yvette Cooper did not have. "I will write to the Hon. Gentleman," she concluded. The promised letter did not arrive until just before Christmas. The number of vaccines using UK-sourced bovine materials between 1989 and 1992 was, the minister revealed, "not known". She went on: "The vaccines in use at that time which used bovine material in the early stages of manufacture and as a medium for cell growth were DTP (Diphtheria/Tetanus/Pertussis), BCG, oral polio and measles vaccines."

The figures duly disclosed to Mr Baker all show an enormous increase in these vaccinations in the relevant years. For instance, vaccinations against diphtheria in England rose from 603,500 in 1989 to 891,000 in 1991; for tetanus from 644,000 to 946,100; for polio from 606,800 to 899,300; and for measles from 647,300 in 1987-8 to 1,068,800 in 1990-91. The enormous increase in measles vaccinations can be attributed to the government's new, much-publicised "three-in-one" vaccination programme for small children — against measles, mumps and rubella.

Yvette Cooper assured Mr Baker that the Committee on Safety of Medicines (packed as it is with medical experts from the drug companies) "continually monitor the safety of all medicine in routine clinical practice, including vaccines". She concluded "there was not, and still is not any

evidence to link the use of any pharmaceutical product, including vaccines, with variant CJD." Maybe not — though the Phillips inquiry may take a less complacent view. But the question Yvette Cooper and her colleagues still have to answer is: why were the stocks of vaccine which were manufactured with bovine material when BSE was rampant in British beef herds not withdrawn as soon as BSE was exposed and removed from the food chain in 1989? Or, to put it another way, why were hundreds of thousands of children vaccinated with drugs made with material from cattle at least some of which must have been infected with BSE?

POLICE 5

Brutality? As if...

THE police complaints authority (PCA) has launched an investigation into how a 26-year-old

Asian man died last week after being forcibly restrained by a number of officers in Chelmsford, Essex.

Asif Dad, it appears, was detained and handcuffed after officers responded to a 999 call about "noises in the street". Within minutes the previously healthy young man collapsed and was taken by ambulance to the nearby Broomfield hospital, where he was pronounced dead. He was the 34th to die in police custody since April and the third involving some form of restraint.

Pathologists representing the family, the police and the PCA have carried out a post mortem examination. So far the results are inconclusive and, according to the PCA, it is still not known how many officers were involved or exactly what took place.

Nevertheless, Mr Dad's death bears a striking similarity to that of Roger Sylvester, a 30-year-old black man, who died after he was held outside his home by officers also responding to a call about a disturbance. A year on and Mr Sylvester's family still do not know exactly how he died — only that eight London police officers were involved, that the PCA supervised a 10-month investigation and that a file has been submitted to the crown prosecution service (CPS) to consider whether any should face charges.

Sheila Sylvester, Roger's mother, is not optimistic. She described the investigation on its completion as "inadequate, partial and poorly supervised". The force that carried out that investigation into the Metropolitan officers on behalf of the PCA was none other than Essex. And, yes, the force now investigating Essex police is, of course... the neighbouring Met.

Ill Met?

THE amazing case of the Sikh police sergeant Gurpal Viridi, first raised in the *Eye* a year ago, limps on to its next phase on 7 February.

The sergeant faces an internal disciplinary hearing of the Metropolitan police, which is expected to last three weeks and will be held in typically secret circumstances.

He will be represented by Russell Jones & Walker, London solicitors for the Police Federation. When Sgt Viridi asked Russell Jones & Walker to represent him in his action alleging racial discrimination by the Metropolitan police, the firm declined. That case has been taken on by the Commission for Racial Equality.

Sitting in judgment at the disciplinary hearing will be three senior officers from the Metropolitan police, two commanders and a newly-promoted deputy assistant commissioner, Richard Cullen. Last March, Mr Cullen accompanied Met commissioner Sir Paul Condon to the Commons select committee on home affairs. In the hearings Condon was asked about the Viridi case, and replied in terms which were not at all favourable to the sergeant. Mr Cullen is also a member of the senior management team at the police training college at Hendon, where Sgt Viridi's



former chief superintendent, James Howard, who is very much at the centre of the case, was also based.

The case against Viridi is that he used his computer at Ealing police station to send racist messages to other black officers in the area. One of the messages, it is alleged, was sent to himself. It included the logo NF (the initials of the racist National Front) and demanded: "Keep the police force white so leave now or else."

Sgt Viridi utterly denies these charges and has evidence to show that he was not even in the police station when the messages were sent. He was arrested when he and his family returned from holiday in April 1998. His house was rigorously searched and he was charged with the computer offences. The crown prosecution service dropped the case but, relentlessly, the police continued with their allegations. The sergeant has been suspended on full pay for nearly two years.

Following the long report in the *Eye* (968) in January last year, the case was raised repeatedly in the House of Commons by Peter Bottomley, Tory MP for Worthing, who was previously MP for Eltham where Stephen Lawrence was murdered. Mr Bottomley says that despite all his questions about the Viridi case, he has never had a satisfactory answer.

SIR Paul Condon was no doubt touched by the great turn-out at the special "Farewell Commissioner" passing out parade at the police training school in Hendon last Friday. But the smiling bobbies were only there courtesy of a three-line whip imposed by Commander Richard Cullen, director of training.

Enthusiasm was so minimal that Cullen had to issue an extraordinary letter to staff and students. While stating that attendance was not a matter of choice, he wrote: "For those of you who have lost your pride in the MPS (Metropolitan Police Service) best you rediscover it. The alternative is to reflect on whether this is the right career for you."

PRISONS

Bailey's cream



THE private companies lining their pockets courtesy of the government's unrivalled jail-building spree are also helping themselves to the state's high-flying staff.

Biggest catch to date is Elaine Bailey, the prison service's director of security, who as a member of the service's management board must have had access to much commercially sensitive information — which would explain why she was asked to quit her job the moment she handed in her notice.

Ms Bailey has been offered the post of managing director at Premier Prisons, the US-based Wackenhut/Serco partnership which recently secured a second term running "Doncatraz" — the Doncaster jail with a long history of self-harm and violence among inmates. However, it seems she may have breached civil service rules which state that senior civil servants in sensitive areas must get permission for taking up any new job.

The matter is now with the cabinet office. Prison service managers predict it will impose a six-month delay on her taking up her new post. Just in time for the next rash of private prison contracts.

Dr Mike Longfield, the prison service's director of healthcare, has been unceremoniously dumped. Widely respected, he had been the automatic choice to head healthcare policy — but his appointment was apparently vetoed by tough new prisons minister Paul "Bang 'em up" Boateng.

Always looking for a scapegoat, Boateng blamed Longfield for a string of embarrassing reports from prisons inspector Sir David "Rambo" Ramsbotham which criticised the appalling state of both physical and mental health provision in a number of inner city jails.

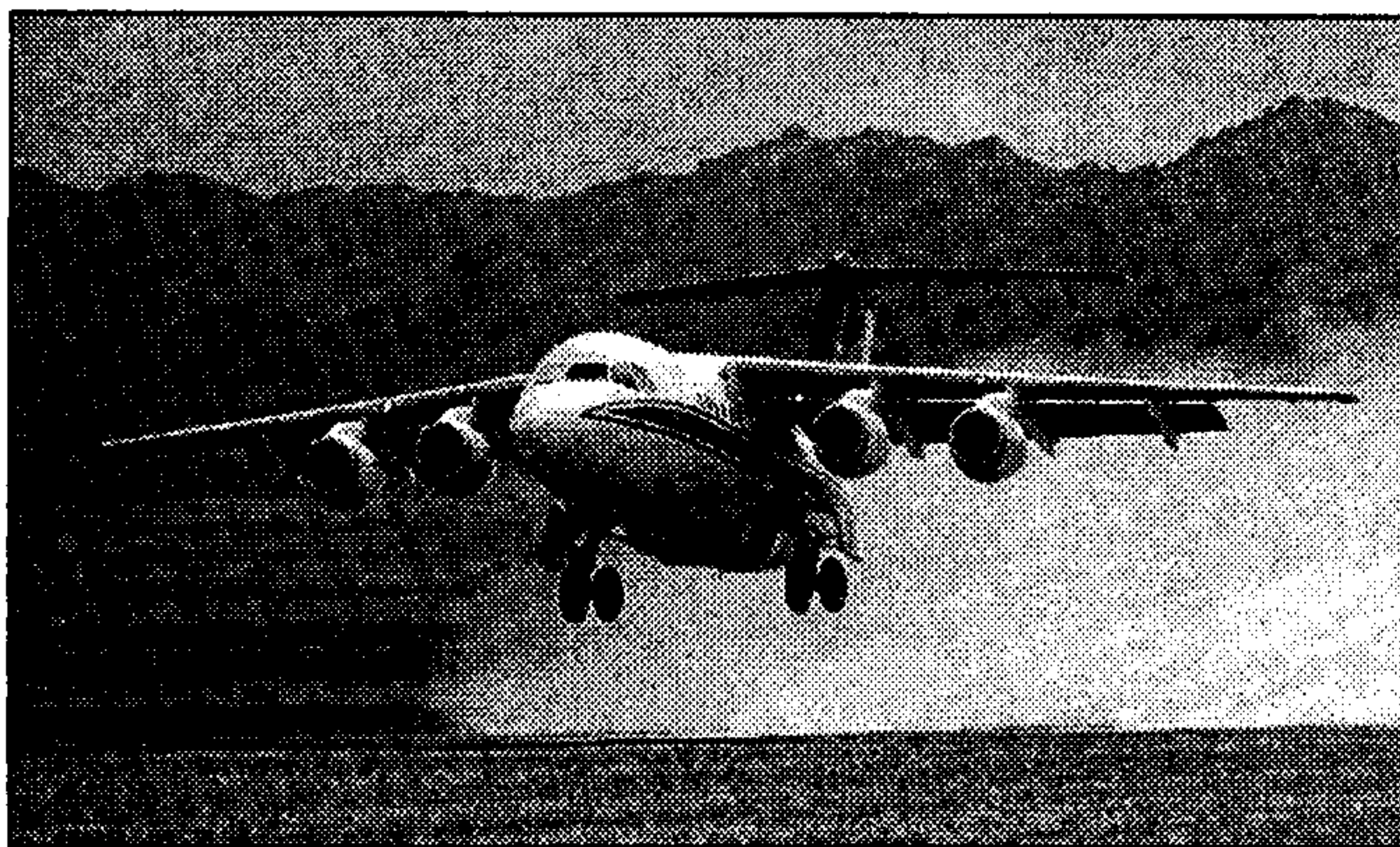
FUMES WHAT A SHOCKER!

THE vast public relations machine of British Aerospace was not at all concerned when contacted by the Swedish press recently about what the Swedish air accident investigation board described as "an extremely unusual and serious incident" on board one of the company's 146 jetliners.

It happened on 12 November on a series of internal Swedish flights, during which a 146 crew fell mysteriously ill. One member of the cabin crew described the experience as "like being on a moonwalk". In the middle of the third flight, the cabin manager, besieged with complaints from the 80 passengers, finally lost patience and stormed into the cockpit. To her amazement she found both the pilots wearing oxygen masks.

The captain's report explained: "From the onset of the feeling of sickness, I very rapidly became worse and worse, feeling dizzy and groggy despite the oxygen."

The investigation board concluded that safety could have been compromised and a full investigation is under way. The only person who appeared to be unimpressed by the revelations was the spokesman for



British Aerospace, who dismissed the whole affair as a "one-off".

Perhaps he had forgotten the Australian bureau of air safety report issued two months previously, into an accident in the air when a captain of a 146, as he approached the runway, smelt fumes, suffered vertigo and became confused. The report identified "the introduction of fumes and odours into the cabin" as a possible safety hazard and suggested that British Aerospace and the engine maker, Allied Signal, should "address deficiencies".

Even more recently, only three weeks before the Swedish incident, three senior British Aerospace engineers gave evidence to an Australian senate inquiry into air safety. The inquiry was subtitled "146 cabin air quality". They testified that to their knowledge at least four 146 pilots had lost their

licenses because of ill health, which they blamed cabin fumes. Another dozen flight attendants with the Australian airline Ansett are permanently off work, and 120 flight attendants exempted from work on the 146 after complaining of the same symptoms that affected the Swedish crew in November.

Dr Chris Winder, head of safety sciences at Sydney University, told the inquiry that in his view the fumes had been caused by leaking or damaged engine oil seats from which mist or vapour get into the cabin through the air conditioning

system. The oil in question, Mobil Jetoil 2, comes in a container which warns: "Prolonged or repeated breathing of oil mist, or prolonged or repeated skin contact can cause nervous system effects."

Among the ingredients of the oil is ticsresyl phosphate, a highly toxic organophosphate. Dr Winder said this gets blown into the cabin and then clings to the skin or clothes, with serious effects on the respiratory system. British Aerospace says that exhaustive tests have disproved all this. But from Canada, Professor Chris van Netten argues that the test criteria were all wrong and sides with Dr Winder.

There are 350 146s in the world (including three in the Queen's flight). They are the only jetliners powered by turboprops, originally designed for helicopters which, unlike jetliners, fly low and slow and don't need pressurisation.

THE GORDANO KNOT

CAN anyone spot the difference between the following two 1999 stories about alleged interference with the course of justice in connection with libel?

Jeffrey Archer was accused of persuading a friend, Ted Francis, to offer to lie in court in a 1987 libel action brought by Archer against the *Daily Star*. Francis wrote to Archer's lawyers agreeing to lie in court that Archer had had dinner with a girlfriend on a specific night the previous year.

In the event, Archer's whereabouts on that night became irrelevant and Francis's offer was not taken up. No lie was told in court, no perjury committed. The offer to tell a lie remained in obscurity until Francis decided to make some money out of it, and told the *News of the World*. In the resulting wave of publicity, Archer was publicly humiliated and forced to step down as Tory candidate for mayor of London.

In 1995 the name of Chris Woodhead, the government's chief inspector of schools, was romantically linked in the *News of the World* with that of Amanda Johnston, his former pupil at Gordano School, Bristol.

Woodhead was quoted in the paper as saying that his affair with Amanda had not started until December 1976, after both had left the school. To back this story, and to keep the *News of the World* at bay, Woodhead and Amanda submitted a sworn affidavit. In 1996 and 1997, the *Eye* published stories casting doubt on Woodhead's account and tentatively suggested that the affair started when Amanda was his pupil.

On 7 March last year the *Mail on Sunday* carried a long and detailed story from Cathy Woodhead, who was married to Chris at the time of his affair with Amanda. Mrs Woodhead told the newspaper (and confirmed to several other papers) that her husband had told her of the affair with Amanda in April 1976. "By the time I heard about it, it had been going on for ages," she told the *Sunday Times*.

This allegation was promptly confirmed by 12 other witnesses, including several former teachers at Gordano who had been Woodhead's colleagues. One former colleague, David Atkinson, was quoted in the *Guardian* as saying of Woodhead: "He is a liar, categorically a liar. That is all you can say."

On 16 April secretary of state for education David Blunkett said he fully accepted the statement

of Woodhead and Johnston that their affair had not started until after Amanda had left school — and proposed to do nothing more about it. "This seems," he said, "to be degenerating into a war of an ex-wife getting revenge — it is getting nastier and nastier."

Blunkett denounced the 12 witnesses for taking part in a "vile campaign". Stung by this approach, and by complaints from some of their members, the National Association of Head Teachers sent a dossier to the police. The dossier included witness statements from former Gordano teachers and other material suggesting that Woodhead and Amanda had conspired to make a false legal statement in order to pervert the course of justice. In normal circumstances, the police investigate such allegations and, if they think they have substance, pass them on to the crown prosecution service (CPS), where a decision would be made whether or not to prosecute.

Instead, quite suddenly, the whole case seemed to go dead. Paul Francis, a former deputy head teacher who knew Woodhead when the latter was an education official in Shropshire, wondered why. He wrote asking for information to the CPS. In a letter on 20 October, it told him: "The CPS has never received a file in relation to Mr Woodhead and I therefore suggest that you direct your inquiries to the police." He did so. A spokesman for the Metropolitan police told him that "inquiries were continuing" and the whole case "could take years". On 26 November, however, he read to his surprise in the *Times Educational Supplement* that David Calvert-Smith, the director of public prosecutions, had rejected the complaint from the NAHT.

Puzzled as to how the director could have rejected allegations in a dossier his department had never seen, Mr Francis contacted the National Association of Head Teachers. He was put straight through to the mobile phone of the NAHT general secretary David Hart, who told him: "I am not at liberty to say anything about the Chris Woodhead inquiry." Still puzzled, but determined, Mr Francis continued to question the CPS and was amazed to be told on 5 January by its customer services unit: "The CPS was never presented with a file in relation to the allegations against Mr Chris Woodhead and the decision not to proceed with any criminal proceedings was not taken by us."

High Principals



Tavernor's tale II

NOT everyone at the Manchester College of Art and Technology is happy with the plans of the college's dynamic principal Peter Tavernor to sell the entire college for £12m and buy (much more cheaply) some old factories and warehouses in the city to house a new college.

The Further Education Funding Council, the government's "watchdog" on such matters, is not at all worried, however. A spokesman told the *Eye* that Tavernor had got "a good deal — we are delighted with it". Not all MANCAT staff and students are impressed. Some recall Tavernor's ferocious attack a year ago on lecturers who voted overwhelmingly to go on strike and then had the nerve to do so (see *Eye* 969).

Other sceptics remember a demonstration last July outside the Queen Elizabeth Conference Centre in London, where a glittering "presentation" was on display of the "property advantages in the further education sector". Well over 100 property companies attended the do, for which tickets cost a mere £195 each. Their representatives slobbered over the real estate goodies held out in front of them in the form of city centre college buildings.

Who sponsored the show? The Further Education Funding Council.

MORE on the long saga of Jenkins and Son at the business school of Anglia Polytechnic University.

Eye readers may recall that Hugh Jenkins was head of the school and his son Jonathan got a lecturing job there which he did not carry out to the undiluted applause and admiration of his colleagues.

A rather sad memo to all staff at the school just before Christmas revealed that Hugh Jenkins has formally retired and that Jonathan would be leaving the school on 31 December. The news was greeted with universal grief.



In the City

"At first, as in all these gambling mania, confidence was at its height, and everybody gained. Many individuals grew suddenly rich. A golden bait hung temptingly out before the people, and one after the other, they rushed to the marts, like flies around a honey-pot."

£ £ £
"Every day the value of the old shares increased, and the fresh applications, induced by the golden dreams of the whole nation, became so numerous that it was deemed advisable to create new shares. The price of shares rose ten or twenty per cent in the course of a few hours, and many persons in the humbler walks of life, who had risen poor in the morning, went to bed in affluence."

£ £ £
"Other schemes, of the most extravagant kind, were started. The share lists were speedily filled up, and an enormous traffic carried on in the shares, while, of course, every means were resorted to raise them to an artificial value in the market. The public mind was in a state of unwholesome fermentation. Men were no longer satisfied with the slow but sure profits of cautious industry. The hope of boundless wealth for the morrow made them heedless and extravagant for today."

These descriptions could be chronicling the greed-fuelled orgy of speculation which is the current obsession with internet-related companies. This particular e-mania sees shares multiplying several fold merely on the whisper that a company is planning a dot com deal, private client brokers unable to cope with the stampede of small investors to their doors and online trading coming from nowhere to a 10 percent and growing slice of stock market business.

But they do not. They were written more than 150 years ago by Charles Mackay in his investment classic *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*. They describe respectively the tulipmania which gripped seventeenth century Holland, the fever over the Mississippi Company scheme generated in France and the contemporaneous South Sea Bubble in England which burst in 1720.

Post-Mackay there have been other bubbles. The railway bubble in Victorian Britain. More recently, the Canadian mining bubble of the 50s. The Australian mining bubble of the early 70s. The biotech bubble of the 90s.

All demonstrated the same pattern that is being replicated by the e-bubble. A handful of pioneering companies emerge, attract attention and score big for their founders and early shareholders. City analysts and financial pundits announce they have seen the future and it works. The stock market is then swamped with www wannabes. Those City investors who missed out first time round pile in. More and more internet imitators are floated to satisfy the insatiable demand.

Fed on a constant diet of newspaper stories of 20-something web millionaires and internet chat room gossip private investors pile in. Even riskier new vehicles are created to carry away the public's money

investing in e-stock bubbles not even e-business itself. Cash is suddenly worth several times its value merely because it might buy into an e-idea. Those who have previously only invested in building societies or blue chip companies throw their money at any e-thing that moves up.

All that is missing is the inevitable final stage in the game — the crack in confidence, the rush for the door, the trampling underfoot of small investor late comers who are then financially wiped out.

Just how close we are to that endgame is confirmed by some of the more disturbing elements of the current e-mania. Firstly there is the appearance — usually of necessity in the shadows or on the sidelines — of some of the spectres from past bubbles. Men like David Rowland and Jim Slater, whose sons have appeared running "blind pools" of cash investing in internet shares.

Rowland was a man who singlehandedly wrote large parts of the takeover code because of his predatory practices in the 70s. He retired to Monte Carlo on the proceeds but has continued to dabble in companies more to the benefit of his interests than those of other shareholders. His son Jonathan is now running Jellyworks which is valued at more than £240m. He says his Dad, old *Eye* favourite "Spotty", has nothing to do with the management of Jellyworks even if it was started with his money. But then he would, wouldn't he?

Jim Slater was the major player in the share bubble that burst in 1973-4. He was saved from prison by a benevolent Bank of England and a sympathetic magistrate who chose to extradite the monkey rather than the organ grinder to face the music in Singapore from the collapse of Slater Walker. His son Mark, who unlike Jonathan Rowland, at least has a track record as a fund manager, has launched Internet Indirect — market value £270m. He too says Dad is not involved.

Then there are the often unseen promoters of many of the AIM listed e-stocks and the brokers who front for them. Certain of the broking firms heavily involved in the flood of AIM issues are long surviving members of the Stock Exchange surveillance departments list of usual suspects. So too are many of the colourful individuals who use the brokers as fronts for their deals. Some of these players go back to the 60s. Many have featured in Stock Exchange, Department of Timidity & Inaction and police inquiries.

Given such pedigrees it is not surprising that the public rarely gets a fair shake when it comes to handing round shares in a hot issue. Time and time again shares are allotted cheaply to anonymous clients of the brokers who can unload at an instant profit when the mug public rush in. As a result the insiders have cashed in while those who take them out find themselves locked in. For there is only ever a one-way market in these shares, something discovered only when it is too late.

Equally not surprising is that the incidence of frauds and attempted frauds on small investors is growing, as is evidence of the flakiness of other companies carried along on the internet-led market boom.

Last month US authorities charged three cyber conmen over the ramping of tiny company NEI Webworld from pennies to \$15 in three days by posting false information on internet e-mail message boards. In London this month similar minnows

Stock Horror

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at the same time

... in Halifax
when it floated

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Monticello and Coburg Group were pumped 'n dumped using these online chat rooms to spread phoney tips for the benefit of those already onboard.

The collapse of Versailles — though not an e-business the first virtual reality finance company of the internet age — shows how investors can be carried away by stories. Its shocked ex-brokers Teather & Greenwood and Raphael Zorn Hemsley are big AIM players. When Versailles shares were suspended last month it was valued at over £600m. The shares are now worthless.

During the 60s boom the story was told of the ever soaring price of a wartime can of sardines. Eventually the latest purchaser of the astronomically valued can opened it and exclaimed in surprise that it only contained sardines. "Of course! The can was designed for buying and selling not opening," explained the man who sold it to him.

Or as Charles Mackay put it a century before: "In times of great commercial prosperity there has been a tendency to over-speculation. The success of one project generally produces others of a similar kind. Popular imitiveness will always in a trading nation seize hold of such successes and drag a community too anxious for profits into an abyss from which extrication is difficult".

VERSAILLES was clearly also a bubble but of a fraudulent nature. Turnover and profits were inflated by cross firing ever more and ever bigger loans between paper companies acting as counterparties. Each return trip saw part of the money left offshore with those running the scam hidden behind entities and bank accounts in Liechtenstein and the British Virgin Islands.

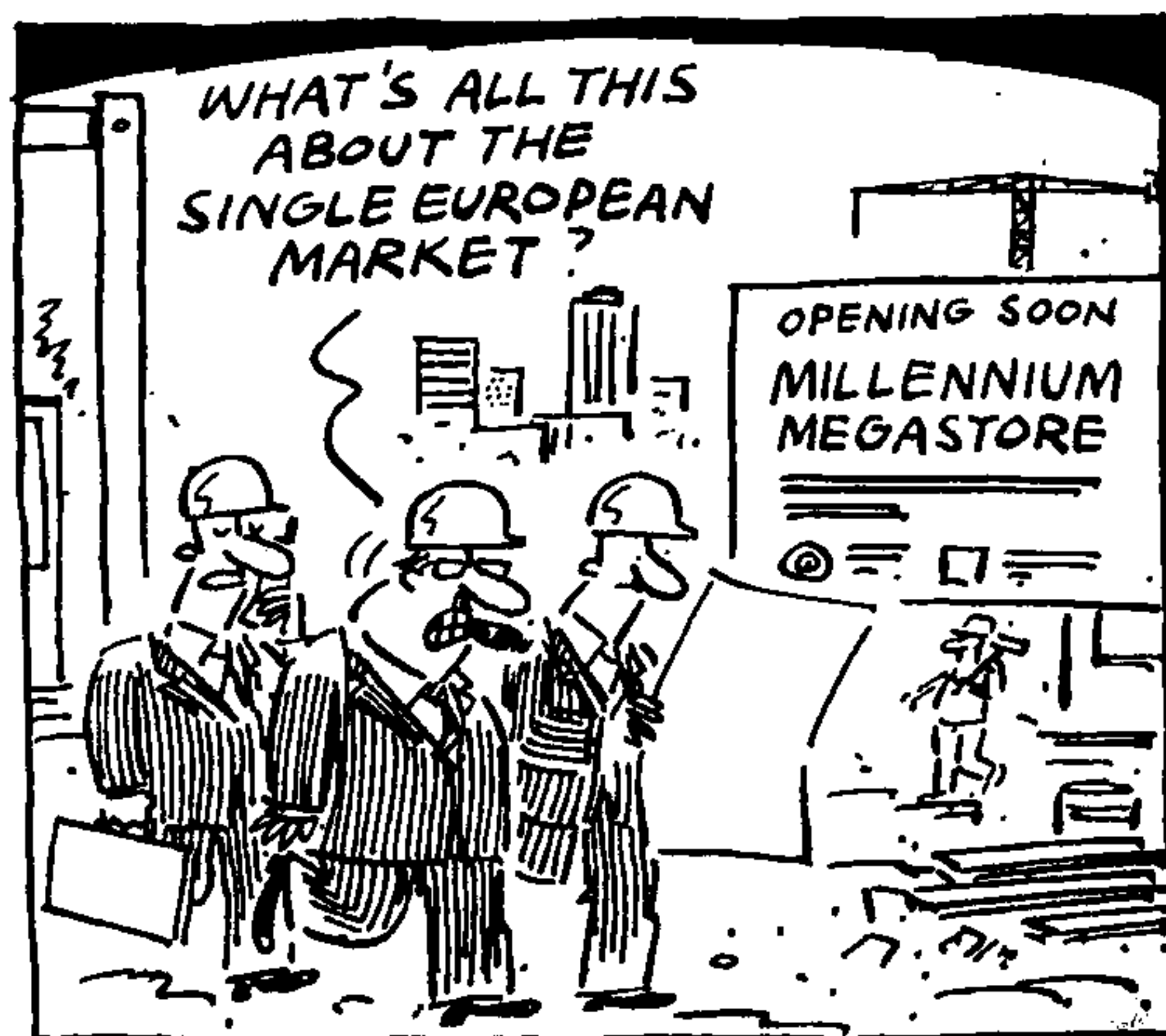
Whether the architects of the fraud were chairman Carl Cushnie and finance director Frederick Clough or whether they were the fronts is likely to be the focus of the receivers and Serious Fraud Office probes. The SFO/Scotland Yard investigation is not expected to start for several months awaiting completion of a report on the paper trail by outside forensic accountants.

Meanwhile Cushnie is being ever so helpful as he may need to be if the receivers or others are not to seek a world-wide freezing order on his assets to protect any future claim to recover the £29m he pocketed from selling Versailles shares without revealing the DTI investigation.

'Slicker'

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE/RIGG



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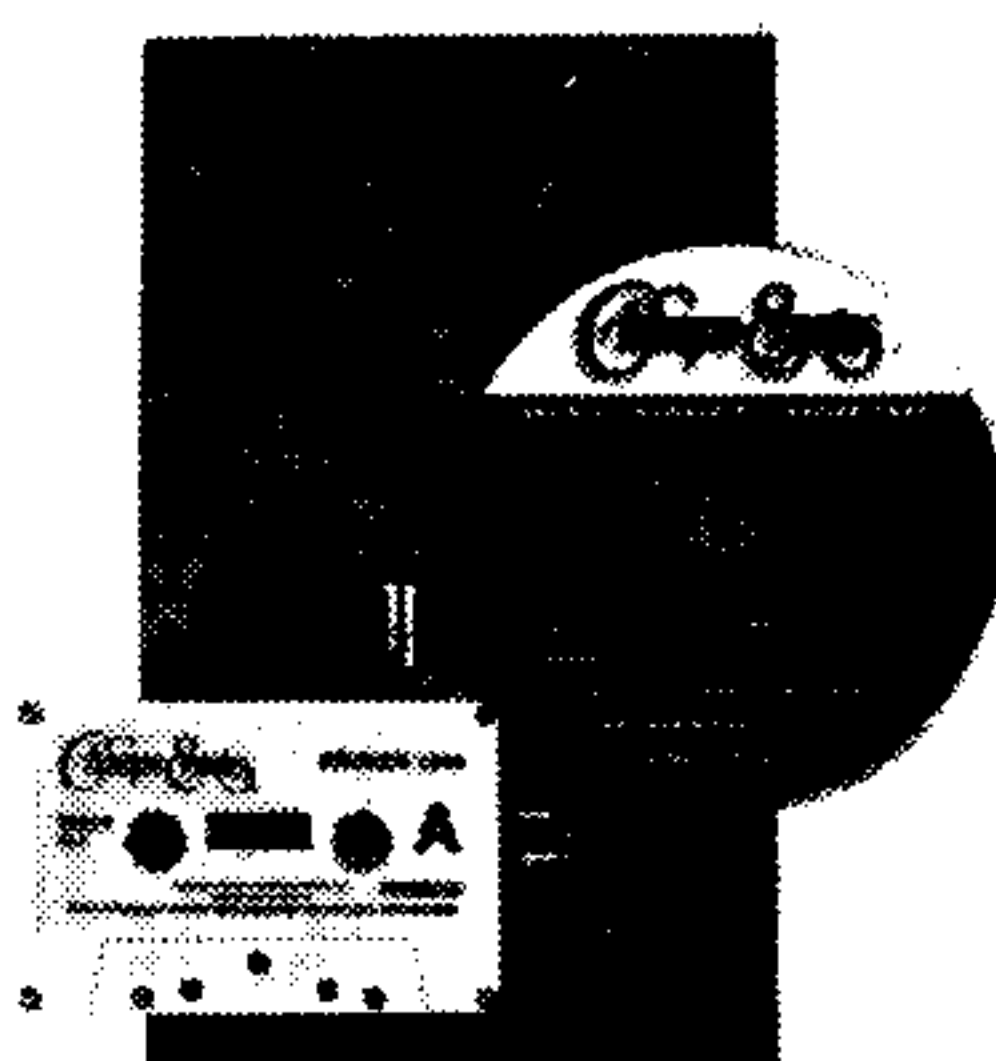
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Schau ins Land in German: Professional journalists in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland provide a fascinating overview of German-speaking Europe every month in *Schau ins Land*. Recent issues have featured interviews with Nobel laureate Günter Grass and figure skater Katarina Witt, a visit to Goslar in the Harz Mountains, and a look at the newly renovated Reichstag in Berlin.



Puerta del Sol in Spanish: A talented group of broadcast journalists in Madrid examines the colourful textures of Hispanic culture every two months. Among the segments on recent editions are visits to the island of Lanzarote, the Alhambra in Granada, and the Grand Mosque in Córdoba. A

commemoration of Argentine poet and writer Jorge Luis Borges on the 100th anniversary of his birth, a profile of Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez, and a feature on Galician folk instruments are other highlights of this exceptional audiomagazine.

Acquerello italiano in Italian: Produced six times a year in Rome, *Acquerello italiano* showcases the vitality and style of contemporary Italy. The current edition features an interview with filmmaker Bernardo Bertolucci, as well as segments on Italian humanitarian efforts in Kosovo, Italy's new 24-hour news network, and the canonization of Padre Pio, one of the country's most beloved clerics.



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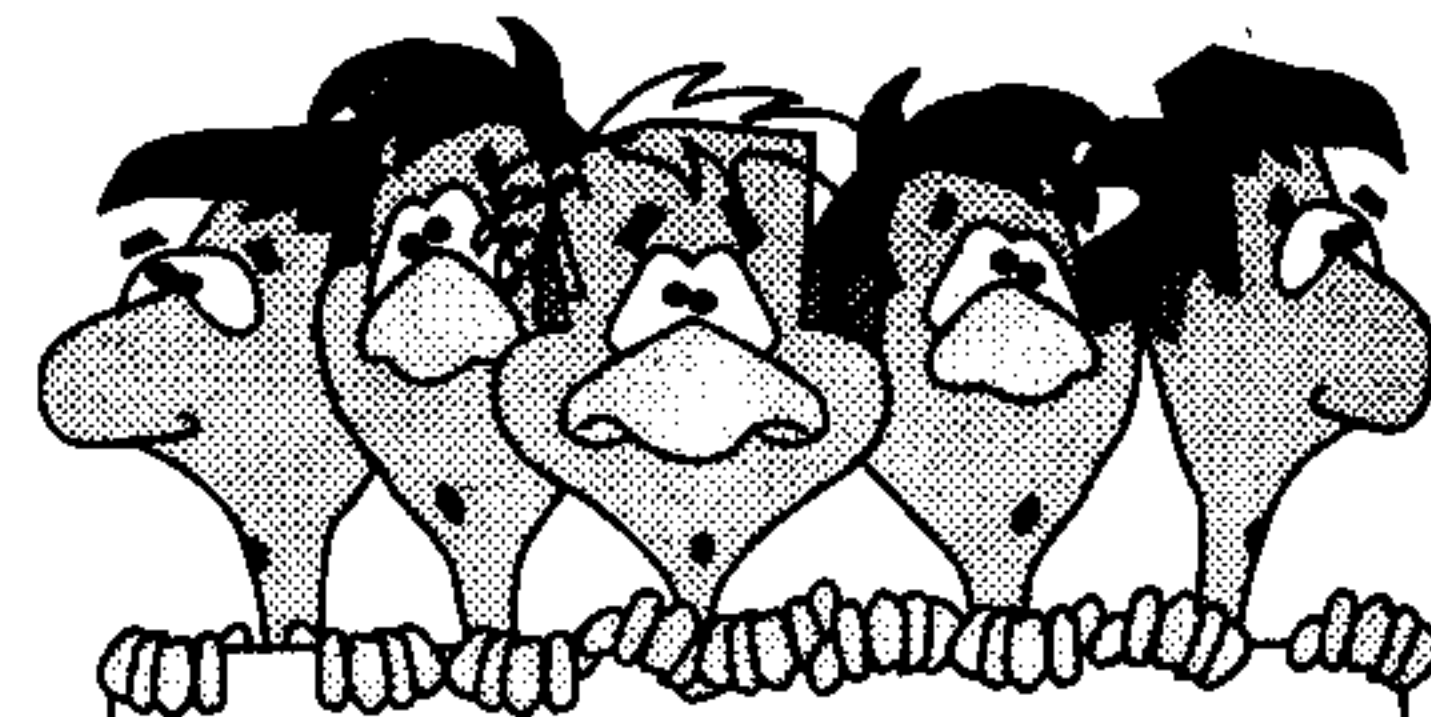
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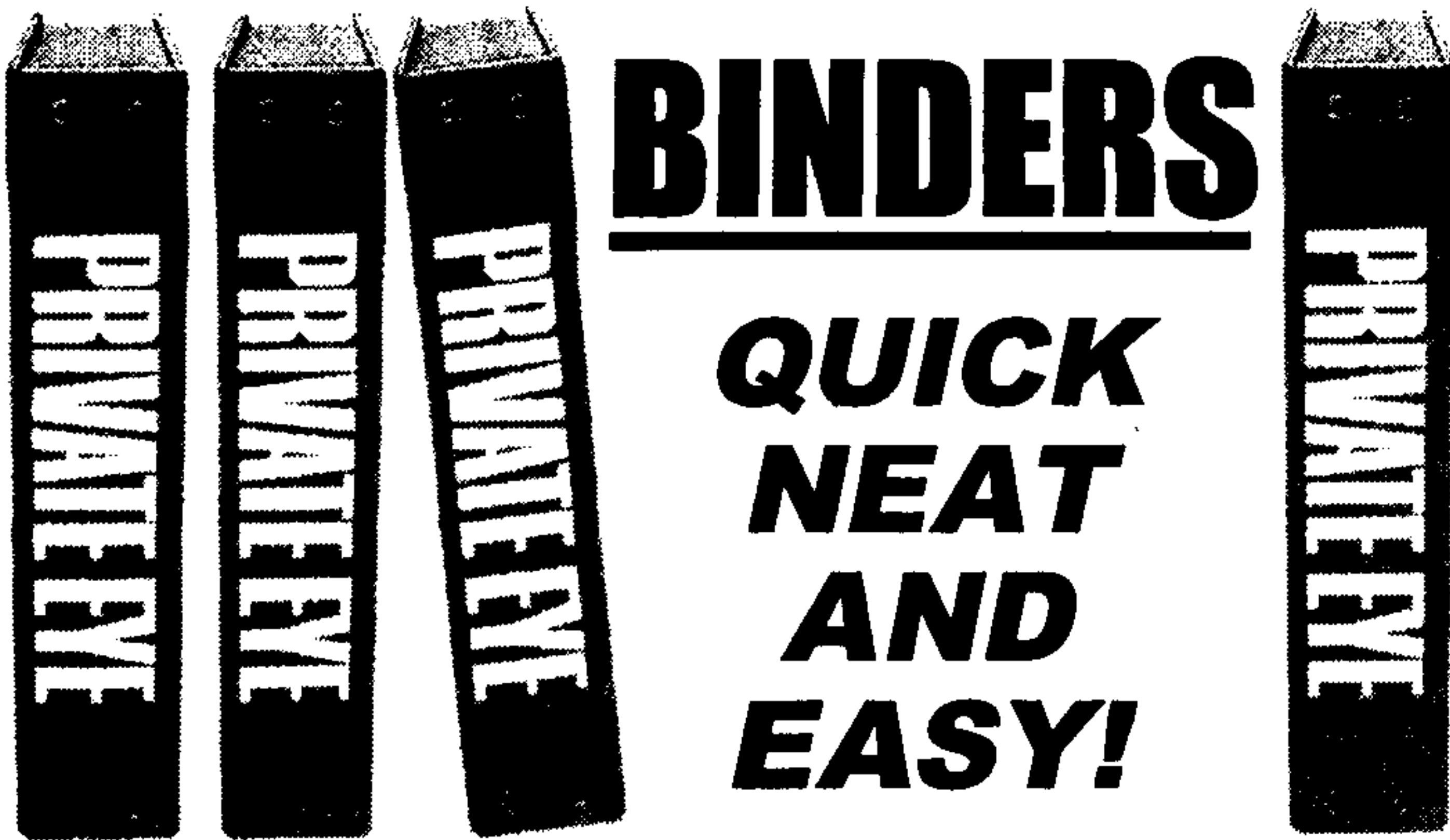
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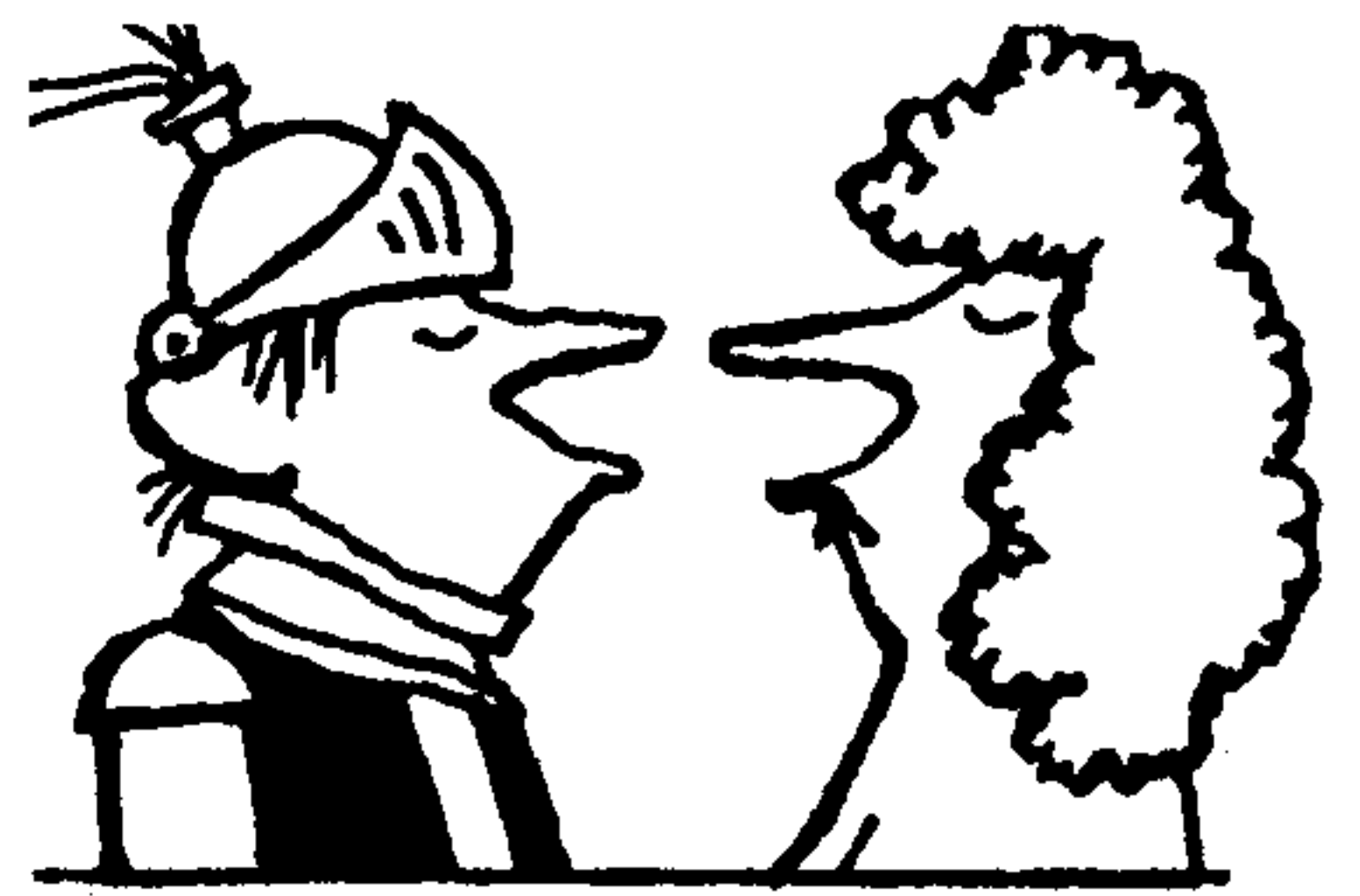
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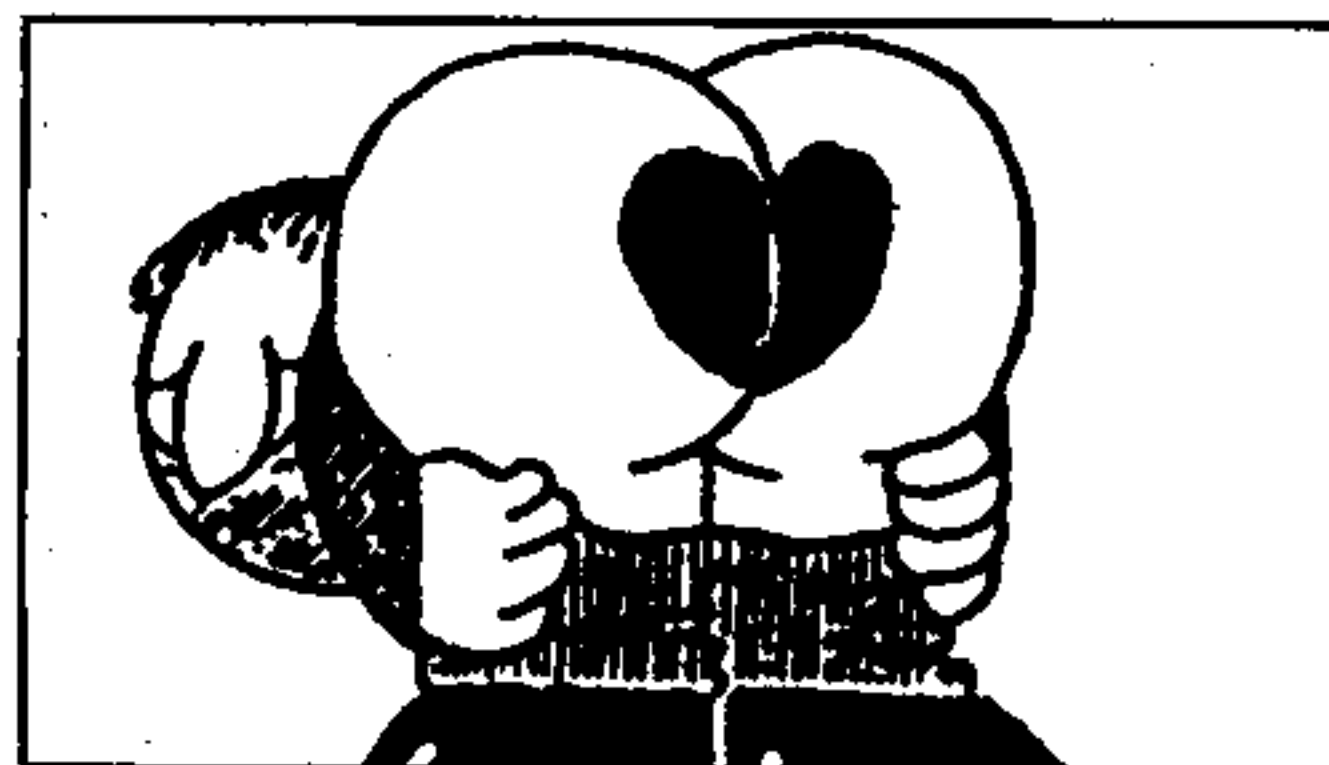
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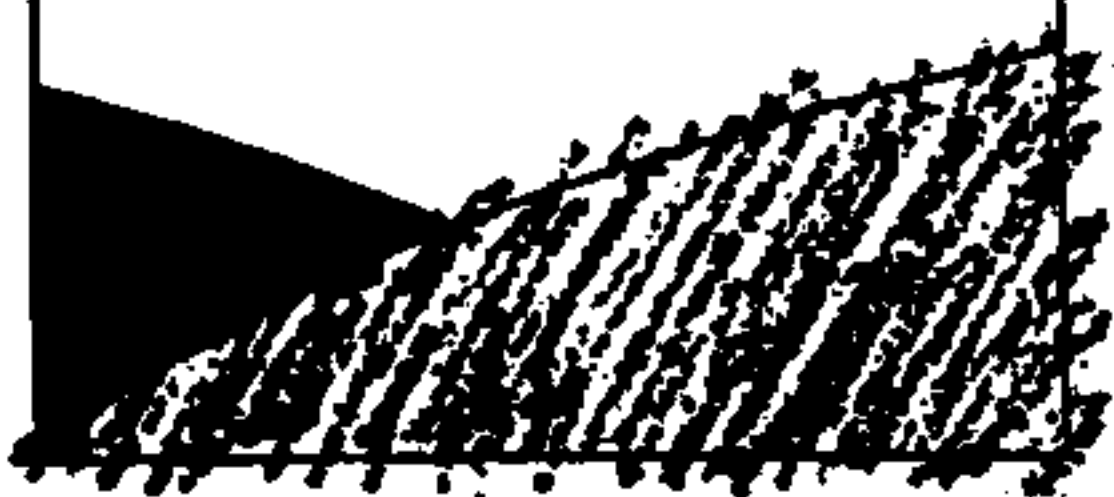


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